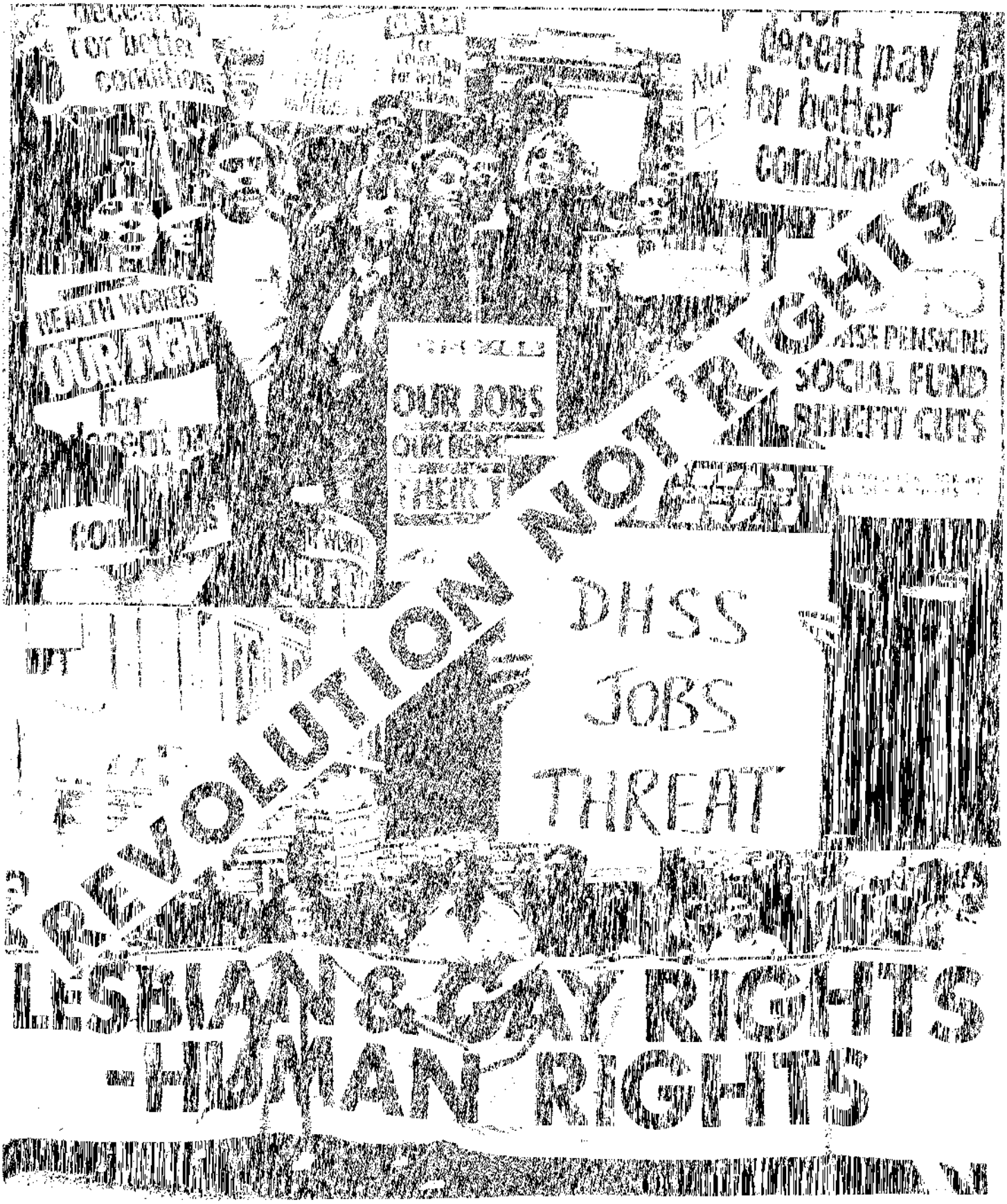
FIRST ISSUE!

SUBVERSION

40p



INTRODUCING SUBVERSION

This journal is being produced by ex-members and sympathisers of the WILDCAT group, which dissolved itself earlier this year.

We got together in February this year because we wanted to see the continuation of a voice for revolutionary communist politics.

We want "SUBVERSION" to contain articles which are both interesting and informative - and most importantly free of the idiotic jargon and sectarian slag-offs of most of the left communist press. It is in this spirit of non-sectarianism that we have reprinted a number of leaflets produced by other groups.

"SUBVERSION" welcomes contributions from its readers, whether articles, leaflets or letters. We would prefer them to be typed and insist that writers attempt to produce them in a style that is easily understandable by anyone interested in reading them.

The deadline for the next issue is the end of June 1988.

"SUBVERSION" is not just a publishing project. We look forward to meeting people who are genuinely interested in the communist ideas expressed in this journal. If you like what you have read and want to meet us, either for discussion or to work together in our activities, please contact us.

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Wildcat A clarification

The WILDCAT group dissolved itself earlier this year. The reasons are too long and tortuous to go into here. However, anyone interested can obtain a copy of the dissolution statement by writing to our Manchester address. One individual ex-member of Wildcat has recently brought out a journal calling itself WILDCAT 11. We would like to stress that there is no organisational continuity between this and the previous 10 issues of WILDCAT. Having said that, however, issue "11" does contain a lot of interesting material, including one article on workers' democracy and minority action which we had intended to publish ourselves. It can be obtained for 50p plus postage from BM CAT, LONDON WC1N 3XX (without mentioning the name WILDCAT on the envelope).

1st April 1989 Leeds Other Paper.11

Shunted from pit to pit

Dear LOP,

I bought a LOP last week to read the article on the closure of South Kirkby pit. I could not believe the statement made by our Branch Secretary Frank Clarke, he said, "the tragic thing is there is still 50 million tonnes of coal left".

Does Clarke really think that by pleading with British Coal, that there is still coal left in the ground will persuade them to keep our jobs?

British Coal don't mine coal because of fondness of coal but because they make a profit out of it and when they don't, they shut pits.

I always thought the NUM was meant to fight for jobs, but all they seem to do is give advice to the bosses about the availability of coal.

The reason not many men voted to accept closure was because they accepted BC's argument about profitability and because they were sick of BC management pushing us around. This anger could have been turned into a fight back.

I don't care if South Kirkby made a profit or a loss, I need a living wage and I'm not prepared to be shunted from pit to pit. It seems to have escaped Clarke's attention that there are over 1,000 miners in my position in Kirkby.

Instead of telling BC where the coal is he should argue that the miners in the Hemsworth Area need a job and a decent wage. If he argued that, then perhaps we would have got the fight back we need so badly.

Yours
a South Kirkby Miner

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SYLVIA PANKHURST AND THE WSF

THE FIGHT BACK AGAINST BENEFIT CUTS

ANIMAL LIBERATION

/MAY/JUNE 1988.

STILL AVAILABLE FROM US:

'CAPITALISM AND ITS REVOLUTIONARY DESTRUCTION' BY 'WILDCAT'

20p from Box W, c/o Raven
75 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 2BU.

HEALTH WORKERS' STRIKES

John Harris/IFL

The Unions (and the Labour Party) have had some success in derailing the recent struggle in the National Health Service. They have done this by keeping apart different groups of workers in struggle at the same time (NHS, Local Authorities, car plants, ferries etc), promoting divisive tactics within the health service itself (different days of action in different regions, and between different unions etc) and diverting the struggle towards the sham of the budget debate and campaigns aimed at gaining public sympathy with purely symbolic actions and useless petitions.

But under the impact of the continuing government attack on public services, drives for higher productivity in industry, cuts in benefits, the poll tax etc. there is a real prospect of simultaneous struggles breaking out amongst many sections of the working class with a potential for militant, united action on a firm anti-capitalist class basis to emmerge.

We are publishing here, a small selection of the many leaflets produced by revolutionary communists and distributed during various strikes and demonstrations by NHS workers and their supporters over the period January to March 1988.

Each of the leaflets has its own strengths and weaknesses. What we wish to draw attention to are the most important common themes. These are:

1. The provision of 'free' collective health care, despite all its limitations, is an important element of the SOCIAL WAGE. Attacks on it need to be resisted just as hard as any attacks on individual wages.

2. The NHS workers cannot succeed on their own any more than the miners could. There is an urgent need to link together different groups of workers in struggle with a common purpose and common demands in a genuine 'community of struggle'. This cannot be done effectively through the Unions. It means NHS workers uniting accross the divisions of the workplace and the Unions and appealing DIRECTLY to other workers particularly those already in struggle.

3. Whatever 'benefits' accrue to the working class within the framework of the NHS the 'sercice' is NOT 'ours' but an institution or the capitalist state. It emmerged in a situation of high demand for labour and as part of an attempt to dampen potential social unrest following World War Two. The present attacks are a response to the deepening world economic crisis and a lessening of demand for labour. The form of this attack might vary between Tory and Labour but any government would be forced to attack NHS funding, wages and conditions in the present circumstances.

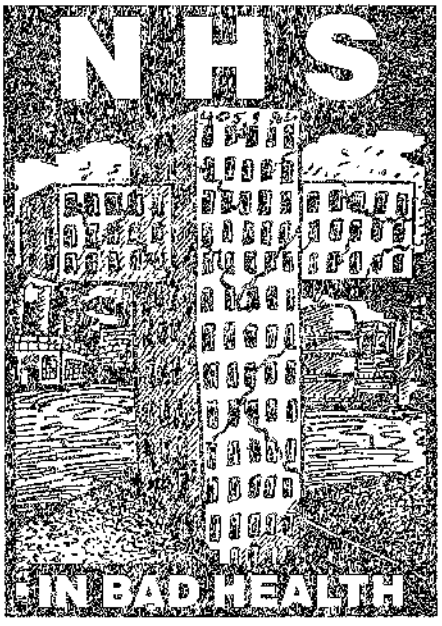
4. No health service within the framework of capitalism can have a major influence on the ill-health of the working class as a whole, which is the result of the material deprivation, exploitation and alianation of our class under capitalism. This can only change through the reoriantation of productive life towards human needs in communist society.

the british disease is back

By launching a spate of strikes, healthworkers have helped develop what is already a season of active discontent. This is especially important in view of the relative lull in collective workplace struggle since the end of the year-long miners' strike in 1985. In recent weeks a growing number of workers have used the strike weapon against British bosses, in both the 'private' and 'State' sectors. As well as the much publicised strikes on the ferries and at Ford and Land Rover, there have been strikes by pit deputies, bus drivers, dole office workers, council workers and others.

A couple of months ago Thatcher claimed to have 'cured the British disease'(striking). Now thw British rulers have caught a touch of the same disease which has recently been troubling their counterparts abroad, including in South Africa, Rumania, Belgium, France, Armenia, Bangladesh and Spain.

The Healthworkers' action so far has not been without victories. In January a week of action by blood transfusion workers forced the DHSS to drop the planned cuts in meal allowances. Nurses in Manchester struck and made the government scrap its plans to dock their bonuses, at least for the time being. But the deterioration of health provision and hospital working



conditions continues apace, as the demand for 'healthy' labour falls. This attack on living standards doesn't just effect healthworkers, and not surprisingly, healthworkers on their own would be unable to force the government to back down. Even the miners in 1984-85 couldn't do that.

...LETS MAKE IT CONTAGEOUS

Major concessions could only be forced on the State and company bosses if a number of seperate struggles were to link up and develop together. This would mean a 'Hot

Spring' of struggle which would have to be autonomous enough to make the Winter of Discontent look like a vicar's tea party or a TV debate. But this is not at all inevitable, and healthworkers have a major role to play in making it happen.

There are probably millions of workers who could be picketed out by hospital workers. During the 1982 dispute a Healthworkers' Action Group in Leeds (composed of about 30 ancilliaries and nurses) picketed a large number of local workplaces and at one stage succeeeded in bringing the South Yorkshire coalfield to a standstill for a day. On February 3rd this year, four nurses managed to picket out Frickley miners, and Vauxhall car workers, Hackney council workers and fire-fighters have also come out for short periods in support. All workers have their own grievances against the bosses. Now is the time to press them, as well as the grievance our whole class has in common -- against the government's attack on our healthcare.

AGAINST FAKE SOLIDARITY

One of the main forces healthworkers are up against is their own image in the consciousness of other working class people. The current image of a 'typical' healthworker is a female nurse in uniform, with a kind heart but no brain, posing with policemen for the newspapers and sticking brightly-coloured badges on Joe Public's lapels. The acceptance of this insulting image makes it harder to break down the barriers between different groups of hospital workers. And it encourages other working class people to see healthworkers - especially female nurses - as the front line troops fighting to defend the 'national treasure', just like the 'boys' who killed and died in the Falklands for their British and Argentinian rulers.

AGAINST THE NATIONAL ECONOMY

Working calss people who believe this generally also identify with one side in the 'public debate' among politicians, union leaders, journalists, consultants and government and shadow ministers. Basically these bastards are debating the relative effects on the national economy of tax cuts or increased government spending. In itself this should be of no interest to working class people fighting to defend or increase their benefits, pay-packets, housing conditions or access to health treatment.

It is indisputable that a system where some sort of health treatment is available to working class people irrespective of income or svaings is preferable to one where we are pushed back onto individual self-reliance. But this depends on how much power we have in the conflict with our enemies. It has nothing to do with which enemy policy is 'right' or 'sensible' for the economy. From the rulers' point of view, our wages and well-being are a mere cost.

The economy is not ours, it is the rulers'. We have no country,nation or economy to defend. Let the economy go to rack and ruin Let inflation rip. Let stockbrokers and directors of private and State companies throw themselves out of windows. It will save us the trouble of pushing them. What matters is the power of our class.

What we're up against is a ruling class which is trying to make us pay for their crisis, by means of job cuts, low wages and cuts in benefits and services. A breakthrough in struggle must confront the illusion that there is any common ground. We don't have any shared interests with the men and women who live off our dispossession, whether that means the bankers in the City of the bureacrats in the Kremlin. Our liberation means their annihilation.

The fight to radicalise the struggle is not just a matter of ideas. There are concrete organisations which specialise in fake solidarity and the defence of the national economy. They are called unions.

"Even the Union was stamping on anger"

- Nurse at Guy's Hospital

The last thing the unions want is a united wave of strikes. It was the Winter of Discontent in 1979 which ended their cosy relationship with the Labour government, the same government which had already been cutting health provision for three years, and for which wage growth was the number one problem. A strike wave now would threaten not only the 'new realist' unions which plan to introduce 'no-strike deals' and similar schemes, but also the left-led unions who won't be of very much help to the bosses if they let the workers get out of control. Hector Mackenzie, the COHSE General Secretary, was acting as a scout for the state when he warned that any reduction of nurses' bonuses would be 'like dropping a match into a petrol tank'. That's the last thing COHSE and the other unions want.

It is hardly surprising that the unions are doing their best to sabotage workers' resistance. The NUS ordered strikers on the ferries back ot work (an order ignored by many), the unions at Ford tried unsuccess-

fully to get workers to accept a 3-year pay and productivity deal, and the NUM called off its overtime ban just as the pit deputies were beginning their action.

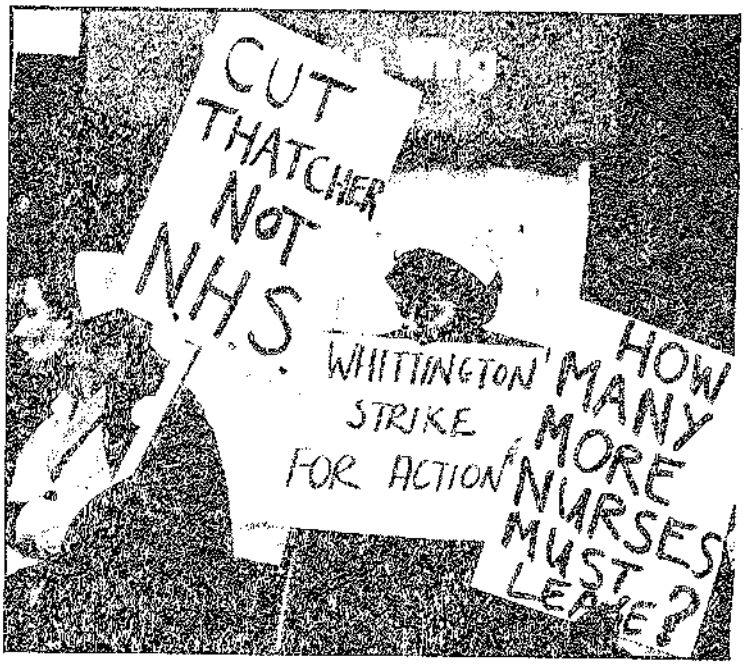
NOT ANOTHER BLOODY REPEAT!

Going through the officials leads to defeat. If the health service unions and the TUC succeed in getting hospital workers to stage a repeat of the 1982 fiasco it will be a disaster. The campaign of one-day, two-day and then (wow) three-day strikes wore down the enthusiasm both of militant health-workers and of the other health-workers who might have been willing to strike if they thought it could have achieved something. At the end of the day, healthworkers not only failed to win anything like the 12% pay rise they were after, but separate pay deals for nurses were imposed, reinforcing the existing divisions in the health workers ranks. Hopefully this time around the question of London allowances won't serve the same purpose.

FOR A MASS MOVEMENT OF STRIKES AND RIOTS

Many hospital militants are aiming at an all out strike in the health service. Whilst it is true that health workers would need to strike for longer periods if they are to successfully picket out other workplaces, an all-out strike would be a distraction from the necessary business of spreading the struggle to other workers.

And not only the workers..... Just think of the strength the working class would have gained if the 1985/86 urban riots had exploded during the year long miners strike, or if the miners had begun their strike during the riots. It should be obvious that unity of working class rebels is not just a matter for workers, who are not the only ones up against government



attacks on our healthcare. Similarly, the unemployed are not alone in suffering attacks on urban housing provision, which is another part of the social wage.

SELF ORGANISATION

The health workers must not remain isolated. However promises of solidarity from the TUC are as absurd as whines of the leftists who want us to beg the TUC, RCN or any union to act in our interests. At St. Thomas's Hospital there was even a petitio to get 1000 signatures to force an EGM where a strike vote could be held. This would be funny if it was not so sickening. The idea that we can rely on unions or democracy is as ridiculous as the idea that what we need is more "committed" leaders.IIn the real world, health workers and their supporters will only be successful if they take things into their own hands and spread the struggle themselves.

* * * \

AGAINST UNION DIVISIONS

Before Christmas, the postal workers' union sabotaged the possibility of a strike by negotiating a deal with management. Before that, SOGAT stitched up the print workers' strike. Unions in the councils have divided workers and tried to prevent solidarity by saying 'this is a picket for NALGO members only' etc.. At Lambeth, NALGO shop stewards tried to turn a picket of the town hall into an ineffective demo and get rid of non-NALGO members who'd turned up in solidarity. We told them to get lost. The RCN is an openly scab union, but health workers have to watch out for other unions like NUPE and COHSE. Who stitched up the strikes of '82? COHSE called workers who struck during the Falklands war 'unpatriotic'. We can only win by completely ignoring union divisions, and organising mass meetings of all militant workers to decide what needs to be done, regardless of whether they are nurses, miners, car workers or whatever. A mass strike is just about the only way to stop the Tory offensive. Even this would only be a temporary victory - they'd bring in Labour to attack the working class, like they did after the massive struggles of '74. All governments are our enemy. Only the destruction of all states by a revolutionary working class uprising on a world scale can ultimately solve our problems, which are caused by the capitalist system.

The world economy is heading for recession, forcing bosses from Moscow to Mexico to attack workers to raise the ammount of profit they can squeeze from our labour. The next wave of Tory attacks are going to make the last nine years look like a tea party - layoffs, work discipline (the new nursing council, the new code in the mines), part time work, massive cuts in services, and the Poll Tax. THESE AFFECT US ALL!

The scum of the Labour Party have been willing accomplices of the government's attacks. In local councils, the loony left have been carrying out the same attacks as their Tory colleagues. Layoffs, cuts, redeployment of workers to different jobs, and in Camden, repatriation of black and Irish homeless people. Recently the Labour leadership denounced nurses who voted for strike action, saying this would harm their efforts to persuade the government to put more money into the health service.

WHO NEEDS DEMOCRACY?

Strike ballots are a way of delaying action and making strikes dependent on majorities in particular sectors. We can't afford to wait for a majority - minorities need to spread struggles directly to other workers by picketting. Where mass meetings vote for the wrong thing, these should be ignored by militants, who should go ahead and do what they know is needed, calling on the rest to follow their lead.

ALL WORKERS SHOULD PUT FORWARD DEMANDS FROM OTHER SECTORS.
Large flat rate pay rise for all NHS workers - nurses, ambulancemen, theatre staff, cleaners, porters, etc..
Enough funds for immediate free medical treatment for all who need it.
No to the UK Central Council for Nursing! Immediate strike action in solidarity with any nurse disciplined or struck off. Immediate strikes against any dismissals, suspensions, or redeployment. No to moderation and compromise! Spread the strikes as far as possible! For a winter of discontent, followed by a summer of discontent! (29.1.88.)

By Wildcat c/o BM CAT, London, WC1N 3XX

capitalism makes you sick

The health-care available to working class people living under the British rulers is indisputably better than it used to be before the war. Not only are there far fewer deaths nowadays from TB, pneumonia and bronchitis, but for more than 40 years some sort of medical consultation has been available to working class people irrespective of income or savings.

This welcome increase in the social wage can be compared with the simultaneous growth of most employed workers' wage-rates. But this doesn't mean that the working class has the same interests as the rulers. In fact the rulers have often granted wage-increases so long as there has been an increase in the amount of value exploited from each worker in a given period of time, and so long as the international economic crisis hasn't threatened their markets and profits too drastically.

The social wage is not essentially different from wages in general. It is part of the price paid to the dispossessed class in retrun for the expropraition of our creative power. This would be true even if the ruling class themselves used the NHS, which they don't. The social wage is subject to the usual limits. They won't let us be paid too much. For example, it was the Attlee

government itself which, after using troops against a dock strike on its sixth day in office, introduced charges for both prescriptions and for optical and dental services.

DYING FOR PROGRESS

There is a very widespread myth that the Labour government of 1945-51 created the NHS out of the kindness of their hearts, their sorrow for the war-dead and their commitment to "socialism". Nothing could be further from the truth. Just consider the facts.

The NHS was founded in the aftermath of WW2, the biggest bosses' war in history. Rival national rulers had dragooned working class people into fighting and making sacrifices for them against their competitors, and naturally the overwhelming majority of the 50 million dead came from the working class, which promptly became the dying class.

The Labour Party and the trade unions showed how much they were committed to the "health" of the working class by actively participating in the slaughter. In 1948, Bevan, the "father" of the NHS, even tried to start another major bosses' war when he suggested that Britain use military force to break the 'Soviet' bosses' blockade of West Berlin.

The myth of the paternal Attlee government doling out health-care to the masses as a free gift with no strings attached is simply bullshit. Fifty million of us lay dead, and after the war productivity soared.

* * * * *

Health-care improved in the post-war period for one reason alone: there was a growing demand for labour. This wasn't surprising in view of the devastation of the war years. Since the mid-'70s, though, the rise of unemployment (which tripled under Labour and doubled under the Tories) has ensured that employed workers have been deprived of the power to swap jobs as easily as they did in the '50s and '60s. As jobs become more of a "privilege", "wage drift" is relatively much slower, and millions work part-time for low wages. Redundancy today usually means the dole. So workers don't have to be paid extra to stay in their jobs.

The heyday of the NHS (1948-76) corresponded to a period where workers had to be fit and strong, and had to exist in large numbers. This happened, and life expectancy rose while infant mortality fell. In the '50s if a million working class people died of AIDS it would have been a disaster for the rulers, whereas today it would mean a million less mouths for the DHSS to feed. Infant mortality is rising again.

* * * * *

But, you may say, the NHS corresponded to a higher level of available health-care, and thus should be defended, whatever the reasons for its creation. It certainly did, and the provision of "free" health-care must be defended, but this is not the same as defending the NHS.

STRIKING HEALTH workers lobbying Lothian Health Board drowned out officials with chants of "All out, all out!"

The NHS is not really a health service, but an organisation to control disease within the framework of the present forms of social life, i.e. capitalism and wage-labour. In 1982 it was said that even the most conservative doctors admitted that 70% of illnesses were socially caused. The real figure is much higher. The main cause of lung cancer is the psychological addiction to tobacco, which itself is only a compensation for the general malaise and fear. In the USSR many working class alcoholics have frozen to death on the streets. In a world where roads are built according to what is profitable, and where most cars have only one person in them at any time, road accidents are kept to an "acceptable" level. Ferries sink after being turned round as quickly as possible. Tube stations burn to the sound of cash tills ringing up savings on labour costs. Finger and toes get chopped in the YTS machine. Working class people kill themselves and get mugged. They get addicted to drugs such as heroin and valium while the G.P.s and other drug pushers see their profits rolling in. The forcible and voluntary use of tranquillisers means that millions of people are partially murdered or carry out partial suicide while the scum who own the drug companies cream off a percentage from the NHS. Drugs are tested in prisons and geriatric homes on working class people outside the labour force, as well as on animals in vivisection labs.

Thousands are slaughtered in chemical accidents, to the delight of the lawyers who move in to make a fast buck. Among some U.S. lawyers, "disasters" are known as "sexy" cases; Bhopal became "Marilyn". Chemical companies reap profits from the adulteration of our food with harmful additives, causing untold numbers of illnesses.

THE SIN OF WAGES IS DEATH

Miners are murdered by coal-dust poisoning, or receive chronic back-injuries from a lifetime's work in three-foot seams. In South Africa the rate at which striking miners were killed by cops during last year's strike was less than the average death-rate due to "accidents" when they're at work. All over the world, from Doncaster to the Donets Basin, industrial workers suffer a range of diseases and injuries according to what is profitable for the boss, whether that means a private company or a department of State. Office workers contract eye-diseases and migraine. Workers, as objects which are bought and sold, are reduced to a number of hours of labour-power. As Marx put it, the more the worker works, the less **they** live. Wage-labour is the sale of life in return for survival. Shorter waiting-lists are what we need in the short term, but they won't get rid of the Old World of disease, because none of the activity lost in labour can be regained in submission to its result.(1)

The world wide capitalist organisation of disease drives home the lesson that our lives must be reduced to a means for survival, even when we are permanently or voluntarily unemployed. The left portray us as innocents who would beg for work, in fact there are many ways in which our availability is itself shaped and restricted by the intensification of poverty. This is the function of the deterioration of "health" and housing provision. As a commodity we are often available only subject to demand, and in regions where our weakness is combined with a total lack of demand for our labour-power, we are already being slaughtered according to the needs of the economy, under cover of "natural" disasters or so-called "scarcity". This hasn't happened yet in most of the "developed" regions only because urban traditions of collective resilience have given us solid ground to fight from. The present State campaign in favour of individual self-reliance is part of the enemy's attack on us.

CURING THE DISEASE

This is not to say that there isn't a day-to-day struggle to defend and increase the meagre benefits allowed to us, such as dole-rates, wage-levels, jobs, sanity, access to health resources made available by the State. Bitter struggles abound, and we support every strike against hospital closure, every action to force the enemy to improve "health" provision, every fight for an increase in the social wage. But history shows that even as the dispossessed we cannot win permanent "security". We look towards an insurrectionary dawn when quantitative struggles such as these we have mentioned lose their significance, when by means of class war and world-wide social revolution we can permanently change life by destroying wage-labour, commodity economy and the entire capitalist organisation of disease, drug-addiction and death.

Contact BM Wild, London WC1N 3XX

SEXUAL POLITICS IN THE 80's

The last year has seen the first serious legislative attempt to roll back the gains made by women and gays in the 60s and 70s. The Local Government Bill and the Alton Bill both look like going through without significant alteration in the near future. We are reprinting below a number of leaflets distributed by communists on recent demonstrations in Manchester and London. There are aspects of all these leaflets that we would question, but we prefer to reprint them without comment and instead invite our readers to send in their own contributions.

Sexual liberation and clause 28

EQUAL RIGHTS UNDER THE LAW? NO THANKS!

We're faced with a whole series of attacks on our sexuality, wages, benefits, the control we have over our bodies, and the quality of our lives. The level and quality of our response to these attacks has been no match for them.

AIDS has proved even more of a 'godsend' to the mongers of morals than it has to the peddlers of condoms. Marriage, the family and 'sex for procreation' are being pushed hard as the last bastions of civilisation. In line with this, Clause 28, the Alton Bill and the Benefit cuts aimed at the young, all serve to reinforce the family.

NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST

"It's (the family's) final destruction would mean the end of every form of higher humanity... It is the smallest but most valuable unit in the complete structure of the state."
Adolf Hitler: Mein Program

In the 'cosy' confines of the nuclear family, even if you're lucky enough to escape without being raped or battered, you are unlikely to escape without feelings of guilt and fear towards all forms of sexual activity and in particular, any which stray from the heterosexual 'norm'.

"'Normal' people feel guilty because underneath it all they know they are a little queer themselves." (Mario Mieli)

To us, sex is a basic form of communication, and like all forms of community and communication, it has been mangled to suit the needs of capital. The family is the first mangle we have to go through.

STRAIGHTER THAN STRAIGHT

The most vocal sections of the Lesbian and Gay 'movements' have been opposing these attacks by going along with them. We are told that Lesbians and Gays can be straighter than straights, promoting family values, bringing up kids to be good citizens, and running businesses. We have nothing in common with the gay or lesbian business owners who line their pockets with all those pink pounds they rip us off for. We want nothing to do with respectable gay culture which reproduces all the worst aspects of straight society.

Our patronising patrons, the labour councils, expect us to defend them in return for meagre grants. These 'ever so radical' bastards who have been deporting immigrants, evicting squatters and sacking workers, are using Lesbians and Gays as a bargain basement constituency of active supporters for 'Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition'. A Labour councillor backed councillor 'Brownshirts' call for 50% of gays to be gassed last year and most of the party wants to drop us as a vote-losing 'issue'. But what's all this compared to the bare-faces hypocrisy of Manchester City Council, who show their support for the gay struggle by asking us to listen to speeches by ruling class politicians - including veterans of the class war like Heath and Kinnock. No doubt whatever speakers decide to show up will call for equal rights. We too can have the right to be alienated, oppressed and exploited. Wow! No doubt our friends in the police force will see we receive 'proper treatment'.

The only role for most of the organisers and invited speakers at any real 'festival of the oppressed' (like Stonewall or the gay riots after Milk's assassination) is that of TARGETS!

'The more you struggle, the more we like it!'

PERVERSE TIMES

We are labelled 'perverts' by a totally perverse society and yet still we are being asked to fight for integration into a society which measures our worth in pound signs.

We don't want 'rights'. The very existence of rights implies state oppression. The state grants us (carefully defined and strictly limited) rights so that we'll accept the rest of state oppression.

WE DON'T WANT INTEGRATION, WE WANT DESTRUCTION. Its our reality against theirs. We want to destroy class society, the family and the state.... our struggle for sexual liberation is part of the class struggle for communism.

TOWARDS A GAY COMMUNISM

Communism has nothing to do with the antics of the C.P.'s, the Trots or the so-called communist states, who's record of sexual repression is matched only by their ferocious exploitation of the working class.

It has nothing to do with labour councils and their budgets.

Nor is it some future utopia to be established the day after the revolution. It is a real social movement which already exists and subverts all aspects of capitalist domination - sexual as well as political and economic.

The essence of communism is the passionate transformation of ourselves and the world in the creation of a world human community.

FOR A WORLD WIDE SOCIAL REVOLUTION

WITH

UNRESTRAINED PLEASURE

AS ITS ONLY GOAL!

Lesbian and Gay Noise

According to our 'friends' in parliament, in the media and in the various, ever spawning reform groups we are fighting for equal rights, human rights and even gay rights. Well we are aren't we?

EQUAL RIGHTS? WHAT RIGHTS?

But what are the gay rights we are defending? Gay men are free behind a locked door, if we are over 21, otherwise we are illegal! Lesbians don't even have this legal nicety. They are not recognised by legislation. The powers that be however, will of course interpret this as - lesbians are not subject to a particular law, the law in general can be used against them.

The 1967 act merely redefined our oppression. In reality we still have no right to a decent living, to housing, to free expression, no right to bring up our children, no right to walk the streets in safety.

What do equal rights mean? The right to an equal share in the miserable state of exploitation and degradation the majority enjoys? Our liberation cannot lie in fighting for the scraps off the table of our oppressors' magnanimity. Such a sparse table becomes rapidly more empty as economic crisis deepens and they increasingly feel the pinch. Out goes that sweet-nothing liberalism and in comes the jointed truncheon.

SO, WHAT ARE WE FIGHTING FOR

If we are fighting for the liberation of our sexuality and from oppression on the basis of gender, race and sexuality it is important to first identify our enemy. In whose interest is the division of society? Of the working class? It is the interest of capitalism!

It is only since the rise of capitalism and its accompanying patriarchal ideology that the nuclear family has developed, hand in hand with the concept of exclusive sexuality: the categorisations of the heterosexual and homosexual rather than as previously was the case that only the actions of a person were defined.

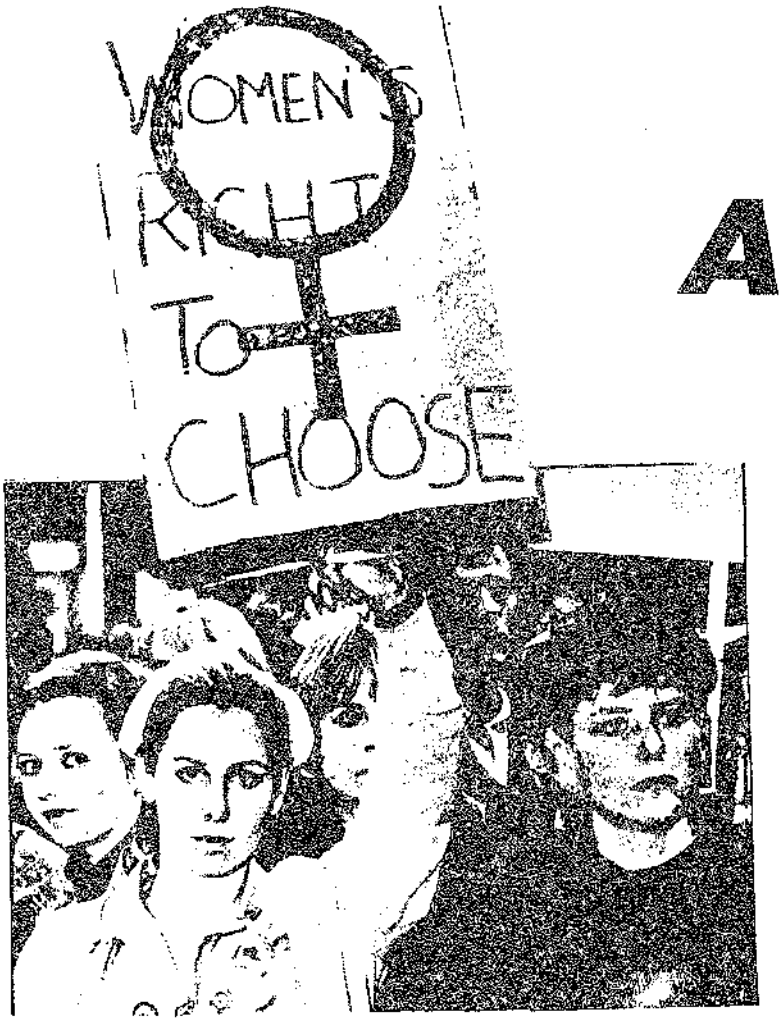
This didn't happen by accident - the family institution was designed to serve the interests of the ruling class. Simultaneously it serves to both control and indoctrinate those brought up under its wings according to a set of rigid and repressive values whilst creating an enemy within. A socially unacceptable group whose frightening existence acts as a warning to those who might deviate in the exploration of their own individuality.

From all sides it is the agencies of capital which attack us. Especially cynical are those professional liberators - our would be masters - the Labour party, RCP, and other leftists. They throng round any groups which shows signs of militancy in order to recruit for their own ends. By placing energies and hope in their keeping we have deluded ourselves. We must realise that all parties are an oppressive part of capitalism. The last resort of capitalism would be to try to disguise itself as communism.

Our only realistic objective in fighting this bill is to use what little political freedom we have, in order to fight a system in which 'unfreedom' is the rule, and to which a 'right' is a delusion.

If there is ever to be liberation for lesbians and gays, it can only come through the destruction of capitalism and its first weapon - the state. Only through the establishment of a world human community, the achievement of communism, can such freedom be found. As lesbians and gays we must organise and fight in solidarity with the autonomously organised working class.

Contacts: LGN, Box LGN, 180 Mansfield Road, Nottingham.



ALTON BILL

It looks like the parliamentary windbags may have talked this bill out, at least temporarily. We don't doubt that similar attacks will follow and think the following leaflet is still relevant.

BODIES IN THE FRONTLINE

If David Alton is successful in his attempt to reduce the maximum time limit for abortions from 28, to 18 weeks it will mean misery for thousands of women. If this had been in effect as law in 1986, 5665 women would have been forced to give birth to unwanted children.

A DOCTORS RIGHT TO CHOOSE.

The medical profession is currently recommending a time limit of 24 weeks but even this would be a significant defeat. In any case the situation at the moment is hardly desirable in itself. The 1967 Abortion Act certainly doesn't provide for free abortion on demand: a woman needs to get the permission of two doctors and even if this is forthcoming she may well end up having to pay out. In most areas abortion cannot be obtained on the National Health Service after the 10th week of pregnancy while in many places it is difficult to get one before this: in Birmingham, for instance, only 5% of abortions are carried out on the NHS.

Many feminists argue that restrictions on access to abortion represent an attempt by men to control women's reproductivity. For a start this implies that all men have an interest in controlling women's bodies, which we don't accept: it is hard to see how a working class man whose wife has to give up her job because she can't get an abortion can be said to be gaining any benefit. Nor is it true that all women are equally affected by such restrictions. Whatever the situation as regards legal 'rights', rich women have always been able to obtain abortions (by paying large sums to private surgeons or going abroad) or if they have a child, to pay somebody else to look after it. For working class women on the other hand the choice is often between an operation they can ill afford (or before '67 a dangerous back street abortion) or struggling to bring up a child while holding down a job at the same time. This is why we see abortion (and reproduction generally) as a class issue.

Control over reproduction has got nothing to do with "womb envy". It is partly to do with the need of capitalism to manipulate the growth of population according to the needs of profit. In order to survive capitalism needs a steady supply of people to work in its factories, mines and offices. Making it difficult for women to obtain abortions is one way of ensuring that women are forced to continue to breed generation after generation of new workers. Of course in parts of the world where the poor are too numerous to be absorbed profitably into capitalist production - people who cost money to keep alive and might riot if this money isn't made available - population control takes a different form: in parts of the so-called 'Third World', such as India, men and women have been compulsorily sterilized in their thousands.

A more important reason for the new restrictions, however, is to strengthen the family by forcing women into the role of mother. The family is a strong form of social control as it forces people to maintain job stability etc. This is why the present government have introduced many measures to force people back into the family, including selling off council houses, housing benefit changes, the anti-gay clauses in the local government bill, changes in benefit rules for 16-18 year olds, and so on.

There are some measures which women can take now to retain an amount of control over their reproductivity. For instance some women's groups use herbal medicine (which is outside the control of doctors) to induce periods. Another practical proposal would be to compile lists of doctors who are helpful, or are unhelpful, in authorising abortions. Having this information would help women to obtain an abortion within the legal time limit.

The measures outlined above will however only be of help to a small number of women. Only a revolution will finally free all our bodies from the tentacles of capital's control and give us the chance to create a world based on our needs and desires. In a communist society free contraception, abortion and socialised childcare will ensure that having children will be a real choice not a life sentence. We won't get from here to there by wishful thinking though - we must make a start now by fighting against every attack the system launches against us.

UNDER ATTACK

Whether Alton is successful or not, it is clear that anti-abortionists aim to stop all abortions, not just those after 18 weeks: in the past 'Life' (the Catholic anti-abortion agency) has even attempted to get the so-called 'morning after pill' banned. But Alton and co. are not the only problem - there are plenty of other people carrying out attacks that will force more and more women to act as baby breeding and rearing machines.

While the national 'Fight the Alton Bill' campaign invites Tory MP Teresa Gorman to speak at a press conference, government cuts cause family planning clinics to close (leading to more unwanted pregnancies) and funding for NHS abortion facilities to be reduced. Meanwhile, at the same time as they condemn Alton, Labour Party feminists like Linda Bellos are doing their own bit to push women into their allotted role as mothers by closing down childcare facilities and cutting thousands of jobs in local government — previously a major source of full time employment for women. All of these people are equally our enemies.

FIGHTING BACK

The campaign of petitions and letters to MPs advocated by F.A.B. won't stop Alton or anything else. What is needed is mass working class action against the anti-abortionists - disruption of their meetings, occupations of their offices etc.

There have already been some encouraging actions against nursery and playgroup closures. In Camden in December, Under-Fives workers staged a one day strike while 200 parents, children and staff occupied the Social Services offices, blocked traffic near Kings Cross and took over the council chamber, refusing to let the council leader leave while they told him what they thought about cuts in childcare provision.

In the NHS, the recent strike by nurses at Manchester General Hospital is hopefully a sign of bigger struggles to come. But it is not just hospital workers who have been involved in action against the cuts. Just after Xmas, patients helped staff prevent the closure of a ward in Wolverhampton's New Cross Hospital by tying themselves to their beds. And in November council workers and Kerseley miners joined hospital workers in Coventry in a short strike against District Health Authority cuts.

MAKING THE LINKS TO BREAK OUR CHAINS

The worldwide economic crisis is forcing the bosses everywhere to attack working class living standards by reducing wages, making workers redundant and cutting spending on health and social security. To be able to fight back effectively we need to co-ordinate our efforts as a class as a whole.

Making the necessary links has got nothing to do with getting the TUC to affiliate to FAB or with any such coalition of union and campaign bureaucrats - it means militants involved in different struggles coming together to discuss ways of uniting their efforts in a single anti-capitalist offensive. The potential for developing such links was shown in the 1984/5 miners' strike when, for example, women from mining areas participated in an occupation of South London Women's Hospital.

A major barrier to unifying our struggles are the trade unions which by their very nature perpetuate the divisions between us. Even the supposedly 'radical' NUM sought to prevent the full involvement of non-members (including miners wives) in the strike by refusing to give them picketing expenses and attempting to channel their energies into a traditional supportive role as cooks and cheerleaders. In Spain dock strikes have been organised outside of the control of the unions from mass assemblies composed of all those involved - not just dockers, but other workers, the unemployed, school students etc.

By using tactics like these we can move beyond fighting (and usually losing) isolated battles - against the Alton Bill here, a hospital closure there - to forge a real community of struggle against everything that impoverishes our lives today.

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The pamphlet is divided into 4 parts;
PT 1: describes the formation of the APCF through the merger of Glasgow Anarchists & Glasgow Communists and covers the goals & tactics of the organisation.
PT 2: covers their involvement & attitude to the Spanish civil war which in many way was a forerunner to;
PT 3: which details the Second Imperialist War, and the resistance to it.
PT 4: finally, deals with an important debate on the relationship between the working class and the Revolutionary organisation a debate carried out in the wartime issues of Solidarity with contributions from the Council Communists Paul Mattick & Anton Pannekoek as well as the APCF and others.
96 A4 pages only £1.50 (inc.P&P)

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By Jean Barrot

By concentrating on the need to change social relationships, it makes it clear that communism has nothing to do with new ways of managing the Production & Distribution of commodities, in a more even way i.e. what passes for communism. From a clearer understanding of capitalist society we can strengthen our struggles against it.
50p (inc. P&P)

Box W, c/o Raven Press, 75 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 2BU.

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SYLVIA PANKHURST — ANTI-PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNIST

During six decades of active political involvement stretching from her teenage years in the late 1890s to her death in 1960, SYLVIA PANKHURST supported a wide variety of causes. In the early years of this century she was one of the leading figures in the militant wing of the women's suffrage movement. During the 1914-18 war she took a pacifist stance, and pressed for social reforms to improve the position of the working class during the war. In the 1920s she was an early opponent of Italian fascism. This later led her to champion the cause of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) when Italy invaded and occupied that country in 1935-36. After the 1939-45 war (during which she supported the Allies) she eventually went to live in Ethiopia, and it was there that she spent the last remaining years of her life.

Nowadays, it seems that nearly everyone can pick and choose some part of Sylvia Pankhurst's activities to idolise - feminists, pacifists, anti-fascists, and all sorts of leftists from Barbara Castle through the Communist Party to the SWP. But there is another aspect to Sylvia Pankhurst - one which is usually distorted, trivialised or simply ignored: the years from the end of the First World War to the mid-1920s when she was one of the clearest advocates of anti-parliamentary communism.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

It was during the First World War that Sylvia Pankhurst's politics evolved from the militant suffragette reformism for which she is still best known to the anti-parliamentary communism which she advocated during the years 1917-24. By the outbreak of the war she had already split from her mother Emmeline and sister Christabel to set up her own independent East London Federation of the Suffragettes, which later became known as the Workers' Suffrage Federation, or WSF. As this change of title suggests, one of the issues which had divided the Pankhursts was Sylvia's recognition that working class women and men had to fight together for certain common needs and interests - something which Emmeline and Christabel regarded as a diversion from the main task of winning the vote.

During the war the gulf between the Pankhursts widened, as Emmeline and Christabel campaigned patriotically in support of a British victory, and against industrial action which would hinder the war effort. Sylvia and her comrades in the WSF, meanwhile, opposed the war on pacifist grounds, and became immersed in trying to do something about the horrific conditions of working class existence.

In the East End of London, as in every other working class area, the war did nothing but worsen conditions which had already been bad enough beforehand. The real value of wages was cut as wage increases lagged behind the rising price of other commodities. Moreover, many staple goods were either rationed or simply unobtainable (at least not at any price working class people could afford). The migration of workers to areas where the war industries were located, the destruction of houses through bombing, and the halt

in housebuilding, all led to an increase in overcrowding and homelessness. This in turn contributed to a rise in ill-health and disease, not helped by the poor diet which was all most people could afford, and the cost of effective medicines.

The enrolement of men into the armed forces deprived many families of their wage-earners, while the system of Separation Allowances which was supposed to compensate for this was a chaotic shambles administered by petty-minded officials whose main aim was to pay out as little as possible. Increasing numbers of women were forced into wage labour for the first time, and found themselves having to work long hours in terrible conditions for a pittance of a wage. Men invalided out of the armed forces because of war injuries faced poverty through unemployment and the same bureaucratic reluctance to pay Invalid Pensions as characterised the Separation Allowance system.

EAST ENDERS

Mainly through the notoriety of their militant suffragism, Sylvia Pankhurst and her comrades in the WSF had become well-known figures in London's East End. As the war progressed, they soon began to attract a steady stream of working class people asking them to help do something about their distress. As Sylvia Pankhurst recalled later, the WSF saw itself in the role of "the workers' mate, through which women submerged in poverty, and overburdened with toil...could force their needs and aspirations upon the attention of those in power."

Besides organising demonstrations against the war and calling for peace, the WSF also initiated several schemes to try to relieve some of the problems described above. Using funds donated by wealthier well-wishers, they distributed free milk and bread for babies, and set up a 'restaurant' serving food at 'cost-price', with free tickets for anyone who couldn't even afford that. A day nursery was established for the children of working mothers, and a co-operative toy factory was set up to provide creative employment. The WSF's weekly newspaper, the Woman's Dreadnought, which Sylvia Pankhurst edited, was used to publicise endless horrific instances of poverty and deprivation, while Sylvia Pankhurst took up numerous individual cases in letters to state and military authorities, and led deputations to harrass state officials, civil servants, MPs and government Ministers.

THE FUTILITY OF REFORMISM

Despite all the unflagging energy which the WSF expended on these efforts, however, it was never going to be enough to achieve anything more than temporarily soothing a minute fraction of the intense systematic poverty suffered by the people they were trying to help. As the war progressed, Sylvia Pankhurst experienced a growing tension between her humanitarian desire to do something to alleviate suffering now, and the dawning realisation that such suffering could only be alleviated for ever through a complete change in the way society was organised. It was this tension which Sylvia Pankhurst expressed in the rather flowery language of the following quote:

"The belief flared up insistent that only from a society re-created from the root, replacing the universal conflict of today by universal co-operation, could permanent peace arise. Yearning for the golden age of the coming equalitarian society, I passed, in thought, to the extermist pole, whereat all save a world-embracing social rebirth and reconstruction seemed mere trumpery. Then the daily fight with misery and hardship recalled me to do what I could for each of these poor ones."

In the end, it was the revolutionary aspect of this tension which overcame the reformist aspect in Sylvia Pankhurst's political outlook. She expressed this conclusion in 1919: "All my experience showed that it was useless trying to palliate an impossible system. This is a wrong system and has got to be smashed."

WORKERS COUNCILS

The main issue which then confronted the WSF, therefore, was no longer one of how working class people could 'force their needs and aspirations upon the attention of those in power', but of how the working class could realise those needs and desires by seizing power by and for itself, in order to carry out the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a communist society.

The answer to this question of what means the working class would use in this task was provided for the WSF by the Russian revolution in 1917, in which the soviets or workers' councils - committees of recallable delegates elected by and answerable to mass assemblies of working class people - were seen as the instruments of revolutionary overthrow and transformation. What particularly attracted the WSF to soviets as instruments of revolution was the scope they allowed for the mass of

the working class to play an active and conscious part in its own self-liberation, creating its own organisational forms under its own direct control rather than trying to win power through capitalist institutions such as Parliament. The same spirit of grassroots revolt against authority was also evident (to a lesser extent) in the shop stewards', workers' committee and rank-and-file movements which had emerged in Britain during the war, and it was in organisations such as these that Sylvia Pankhurst and her comrades saw a potential for the development of workers' councils in Britain.

THE END OF SUFFRAGISM

During and immediately after the Russian revolution, therefore, rapid changes took place in the WSF's political outlook. The WSF's reaction to the overthrow of the Tsar in the February 1917 revolution in Russia had been one of enthusiastic welcome, because they believed it heralded the establishment of a parliament elected by universal suffrage. In January 1918, however, the WSF greeted with equal approval the Bolsheviks' forcible dissolution of this selfsame Constituent Assembly. At the same time, the short statement of principles which declared that the WSF's aim was 'To Secure a Vote for every Woman and Man of full age' was removed from the Workers' Dreadnought (the title of the paper had been changed from the Woman's Dreadnought in July 1917).

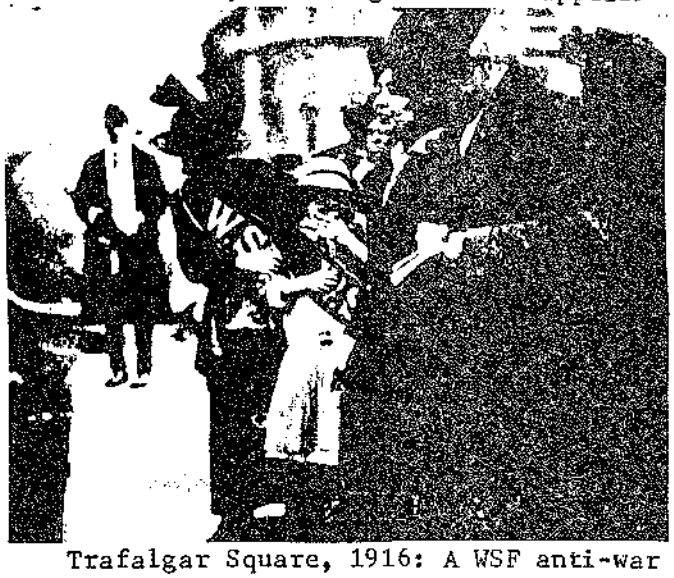
The WSF's rapid rejection of its suffragette heritage, and its progression along the path of anti-parliamentarism, was again evident in May 1918 when the group changed its name to the Workers' Socialist Federation. Two months later the last trappings of suffragism were cast aside for good when the Dreadnought's masthead slogan of 'Socialism, Internationalism, Votes for All' was replaced by a straightforward appeal:- 'For International Socialism'.

THE WSF AND THE INTERNATIONAL LEFT COMMUNISTS

The WSF was by no means the only group to be radicalised by their wartime experiences and by the post-war revolutionary wave sparked off by events in Russia. The war had marked a point of cleavage in the working class movement. In 1914 practically all of the parties of the social-democratic Second International had lined up in support of their respective national ruling classes. Before the war, left-wing minorities had criticised the social-democratic parties' increasing integration into bourgeois society, and had forewarned where this would lead. As the slaughter wore on, these same minorities were at the forefront of tentative moves towards the creation of a new, Third International.

The lessons of the war and the post-war revolutionary wave pointed to the potential political basis of this new International. It would oppose social-democracy, which through its wholehearted support for the imperialist bloodbath, and its role in crushing insurrectionary workers afterwards (e.g. in the German revolution of 1918), had now without doubt become part of the capitalist political spectrum. It would oppose the trade unions, which had also faithfully served the belligerent capitalist class by keeping the war economies going. It would oppose parliamentary action, in favour of the working class creating their own soviets or councils, as they had done in Russia and Germany.

The political tendency which stood for these ideas - the so-called 'left' communists - was a prominent faction of the revolutionary movement in most European



Trafalgar Square, 1916: A WSF anti-war demonstration addressed by Sylvia Pankhurst (left - centre) is attacked by colonial soldiers (right).

countries. The WSF was one such group in Britain. In the struggles to form united communist parties, which was taking place throughout Europe, the left communist groups naturally looked to the Bolsheviks for support in making their views prevail. However, their expectations were soon disillusioned.

"AN INFANTILE DISORDER"

In Russia the infant Bolshevik state was increasingly beleaguered, and the Bolsheviks' ambitions were becoming focussed on hanging on to what power they had, rather than pursuing their professed intention of spreading the revolution beyond Russia's boundaries. In early 1920 Lenin wrote a venomous attack on the international left communist groups, titled 'Left-Wing' Communism, An Infantile Disorder. The hidden basis of this pamphlet was the view that the existence of mass communist parties, exerting some influence within the wider 'labour movement', might cause the governments of Western Europe to think twice about their hostility towards the Bolshevik regime. The small but principled parties advocated by the left communists would be useless in this respect. Instead, Lenin argued in favour of communist parties which would work within the trade unions, enter parliament, and forge alliances with the social-democratic parties.

THE WSF AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

In June 1920, before Lenin's views became widely known in Britain, the WSF had participated in the formation of the Communist Party (British Section of the Third International), or CP(BSTI), which had adopted an anti-parliamentary or left communist programme. However, Lenin specifically criticised the formation of the CP(BSTI) and gave his approval instead six weeks later to the formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). This comprised most of the British Socialist Party (BSP) and part of the Socialist Labour Party (SLP). The CPGB's founding policies included affiliation to the Labour Party and approval of parliamentary action - both advocated by Lenin, and both rejected by the CP(BSTI).

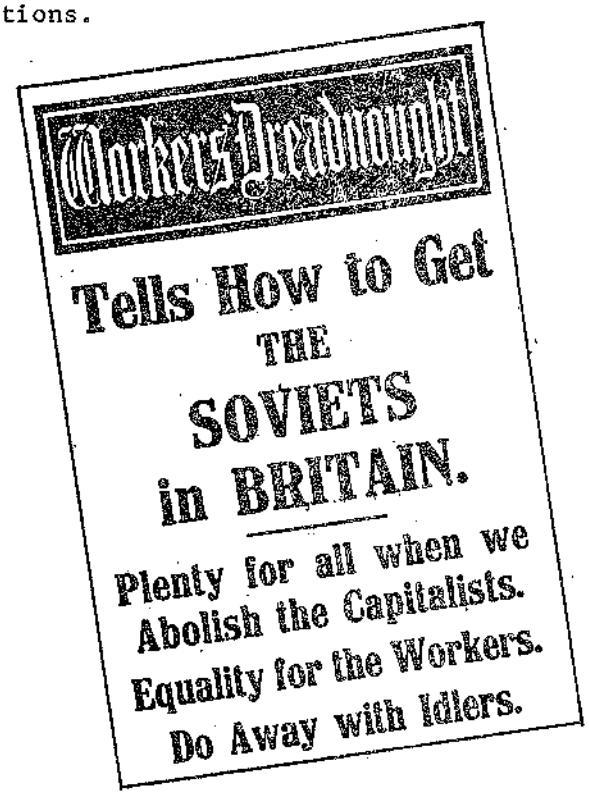
Intense debates took place within the CP(BSTI) about what to do next. The influence exerted by the Bolsheviks' prestige was enormous, and a majority of the CP(BSTI) eventually agreed to enter the CPGB in a merger which took place in January 1921. The CP(BSTI) intended to continue to argue for their anti-parliamentary communist viewpoint as an organised faction within the merged party, and to use the Workers' Dreadnought as the mouthpiece of their views. This turned out to be a naive and ill-conceived strategy. The Dreadnought's criticisms were intolerable to the CPGB leadership, and they eventually ordered its editor, Sylvia Pankhurst, to hand over control of the paper to the party. When Pankhurst refused, arguing that "only by criticism and discussion can a knowledge and understanding of Communist tactics be hammered out by the Communist Party and communicated to the masses", she was expelled. Many of her comrades resigned in sympathy or were themselves rapidly expelled for continuing to adhere to anti-parliamentary communist positions.

Following her expulsion from the CPGB Sylvia Pankhurst tried to rally the anti-parliamentarians in a new Communist Workers' Party. This was to be part of the Fourth International organised by a section of the anti-parliamentary Communist Workers' Party of Germany (KAPD), which had split from the Bolshevik-dominated Third International in 1921. In February 1922 the programme of the Communist Workers' Party in Britain was published in the Dreadnought, but the new party attracted little support and never became a force capable of intervening effectively in the class struggle. Instead, Pankhurst and her comrades were confined to acting mainly as a propagandist group, continuing to publish the Dreadnought on a weekly basis. Even this came to an end when the paper finally ceased publication in June 1924. Nevertheless, the propaganda work which the Dreadnought did carry out during this period was certainly invaluable.

SELLING THE *WORKERS' DREADNOUGHT* AT AN EAST END MEETING

STATE CAPITALISM IN RUSSIA

At a time when any criticism of Russia among the left wing parties was a criminal heresy, the Dreadnought group performed sterling work in attempting to dispell the myth of socialism attached to the new Bolshevik state. In 1921 the Bolsheviks introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP), which, among other things, legalised private agricultural trade and returned some small-scale nationalised industries to private individual control. The Dreadnought group denounced this as a 'reversion to capitalism'. In itself this denunciation was incorrect, since Russia was just as capitalist before the introduction of the NEP as it was afterwards. However, it did at least enable the Dreadnought group from then onwards to analyse Russian society accurately as one in which the state (i.e. the Bolsheviks) had collectively taken on the role normally fulfilled up till then by individual capitalists in the classical capitalist nations.



In 1924 Sylvia Pankhurst condemned the Bolsheviks as "prophets of centralised efficiency, trustification, State control, and the discipline of the proletariat in the interests of increased production... the Russian workers remain wage slaves, working, not from free will, but under compulsion of economic need, and kept in their subordinate position by State coercion." The state capitalism which had emerged from the corpse of the Russian revolution had nothing to do with the vision of genuine communism which Sylvia Pankhurst stood for, in which the state, classes, wage-labour and money would all be abolished, and replaced by a worldwide human community of liberated women and men, producing wealth directly for use according to their own freely-chosen needs and desires.

ATTACKING THE LABOUR PARTY

During the years 1921-24 the Dreadnought group also kept up its incisive attacks on the Labour Party. Its description of the Labour Party as just as anti-working class as all the other capitalist parties was soon starkly vindicated by events 'on its own doorstep'. In the East London district of Poplar, where Pankhurst and her comrades still retained some residual support among the working class, Labour councillors led by George Lansbury controlled the local Board of Guardians, which was responsible for paying relief to unemployed workers. In recent years 'Poplarism' has been cast as a forerunner of the actions of so-called 'radical' local Labour councils in conflict with Tory central government. This is a valid parallel...but only insofar as that the Poplar Labour councillors' need to 'balance the books' of the local state frequently brought then into head-on conflict with the poor and starving working class of Poplar.

At this time the Dreadnought group was closely associated with the Unemployed Workers' Organisation (UWO), a revolutionary rival to the CPGB-dominated National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM), and between them they were often at the forefront of angry demonstrations against the Poplar Board. On one occasion, in September 1923, scores of demonstrators were injured when Labour councillors called on the police to violently disperse an unemployed workers' occupation of a Poplar Board meeting. In the Dreadnought Sylvia Pankhurst summed up the lessons of this episode:

"working class representatives who become councillors and guardians assist in the maintenance of the capitalist system, and, sooner or later, must inevitably find themselves in conflict with the workers... The batoning of the Unemployed in Poplar is the first instance of the Labour Party being brought into forcible conflict with the labouring population in defence of the capitalist system...As the capitalist system nears its end, the reformists who desire to prevent the catastrophic breakdown of the system will inevitably find themselves in a position of acute antagonism to the people who are striving to destroy the system which oppresses them."

As this last quote implies, the Dreadnought group also maintained its opposition to working class participation in capitalist parliaments and parliamentary elections. Indeed, Sylvia Pankhurst produced no clearer obituary for her years as a militant suffragette than the following comment written after the 1923 general election, in which 8 women were elected as MPs:

"Women can no more put virtue into the decaying parliamentary institution than can men: it is past reform and must disappear...The woman professional politician is neither more nor less desirable than the man professional politician: the less the world has of either the better it is for it...To the women, as to men, the hope of the future lies not through parliamentary reform, but free Communism and Soviets."

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE DREADNOUGHT GROUP

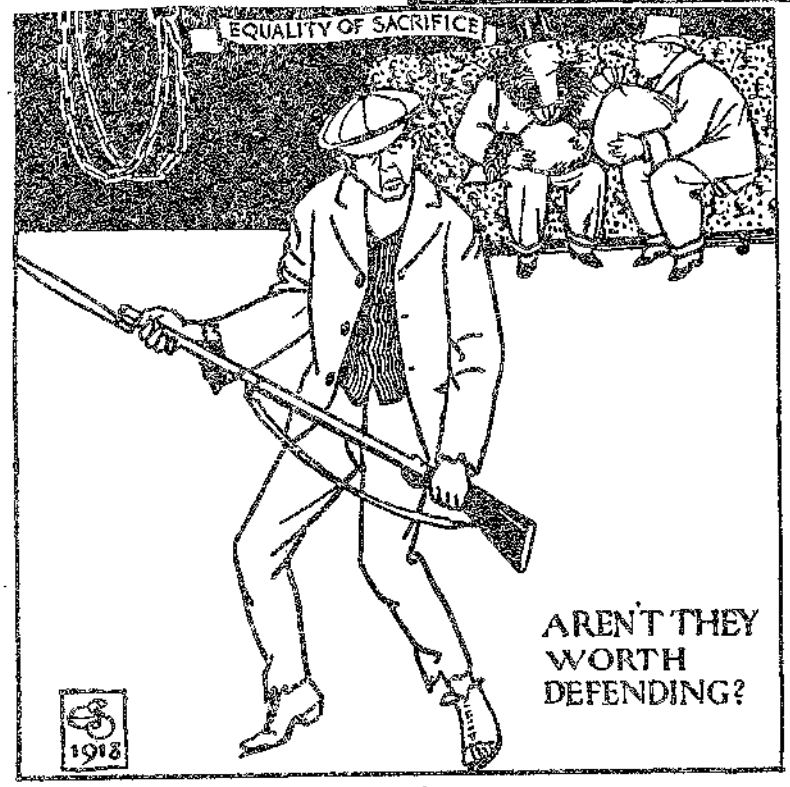
The transformation of the Dreadnought group from an organisation of militant suffragettes into a group of anti-parliamentary communists had largely been a product of the group's experience of participation in the real struggles of the working class, in the context of the international wave of radical class struggle which spread throughout Europe in the aftermath of the Russian revolution. But the crushing defeats of the insurrectionary working class in Russia and Germany, and the general decline of this wave of class struggle at the beginning of the 1920s, soon caused the Dreadnought group's bright hopes of imminent world-wide revolution to be replaced by the gloomy reality of the long dark night of counter-revolution.

Many comrades lost heart and dropped out of the movement; others, like Sylvia Pankhurst herself, returned to the reformist political activities for which she is now so fondly remembered. Yet anti-parliamentary communism in Britain was not extinguished by the disappearance of the Dreadnought group. The same political viewpoint continued to be defended, for another 20 years, by the Clydeside-based Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation (APCF).***

If the transformation of the Dreadnought group is testimony to the fact that the spread of communist ideas is most likely to occur in periods of radical class struggle, the maintenance of the anti-parliamentary communist tradition by the APCF reminds us that a core of revolutionaries must always continue to put forward communist ideas, even during times when there is little tangible support or response from the vast majority of working class people.

The quotes used in this article are taken from the Woman's Dreadnought, the Workers' Dreadnought, and Sylvia Pankhurst's book The Home Front: A Mirror To Life In England During The First World War (first published in 1932, reprinted in 1987).

*** You can read about the APCF in a pamphlet called Class War on the Home Front, available for £1·50 (cash or postal order) from Box W, c/o Raven Press, 75 Piccadilly, Manchester M1 2BU.



CARTOON FROM THE "WORKERS' DREADNOUGHT"

FIGHTING BENEFIT CUTS

DON'T LET THE *?!!'s (DHSS!) GRIND YOU DOWN

April 11th. The Income Support Act becomes effective. It seems to be the governments idea of a second April Fool since many people believe they'll be better off after these attacks.

JUST A FEW OF THE CUTS

Everyone will have to pay 20% of General Rates
Everyone will have to pay all of their water rates
No Dole for under 16's
Reduced rate for under 25's (£26.05)
Single payments scrapped - New loan system with only 1/6th of the previous budget
Housing benefit reduced for low paid workers
Pensions: reform of State Earning Related Pensions (SERPS), no longer related to inflation, estimated to be worth 50% in 50 years
Reduced rate for 6 months if you left your job 'voluntarily' or were sacked.

DIVIDE & RULE

They hope to get away with these attacks using the old tactic of divide and rule. Whilst many will be affected at once (particularly school leavers and low paid workers), others (18-25's) will not be fully affected until they change their claim. The governments benefit advisors estimate that 40% of claimants and 48% of pensioners will be worse off. Citizens Advice Bureau's have estimated that 70% of claimants will be worse off. The attacks on young people are forcing them back into the family. Not only is economic pressure applied, but it's backed up with recent threats in legislation against lesbians and gays and tighter abortion controls. Each of us is supposed to think "I'm alright, Jack(ie)," or see a sudden increas in our poverty as an individual problem.

RESIST OR RESTART?

The Restart programme was smuggled in as a way of "helping people to find jobs" - they stressed that there was no compulsion to take anything that was offered, but threatened to cut our dole if we didn't attend. Restart is part of the framework for POLICING the unemployed - it is being used to force us into their cheap labour programmes (CPs, YTS & JTS) and will no doubt be used to force us onto the WORK FOR DOLE programme (appropriately called NUTS!) which replaces CPs etc in September.

They shovel us in and out of work like shit. We have no job security, no 'social' security and even our limited housing security is being eroded.

Welfare starts off as a cheap way of ensuring social stability, a way of avoiding crime and violence from those who couldn't be exploited in wage slavery at any given moment. Of course, even with welfare we still have riots against the brutal policing of our poverty. We still have bitter and violent strikes against enforced redundancies. How do they intend to maintain social peace in the wake of even more repression and its inevitable reaction? Easy: 26 new prisons at a cost of £870 millions.

These attacks are not motivated by any maliciousness on the part of the Tories. It is in the interests of the national economy to attack our living standards

and increase productivity. The unions and the Labour Party are just as keen as the Tories at maintaining and increasing our exploitation; whether in the governments slavery schemes or in 'proper' wage slavery. Even if you go further left than the Labour Party you only end up with calls for the "Right to Work"- the left wing equivalent of the Restart programme.

FIGHTING BACK

In response to these attacks on us, we need to take large scale action. In other towns there have already been occupations of CBO's, Town Halls and Unemployed Centres in response to cutbacks. Members of Snooper squads have had photos of their ugly mugs plastered on the wall in areas in which they operate. Many Dole workers have refused to work with them, and many claimants have helped them experience first hand the appalling conditions in the hospitals. Race checks have been halted, school kids have taken action against compulsory YTS. Claimants have offered solidarity (printing, picketing etc) to various workers in struggle, most recently to NHS workers. All this is only the beginning.

For Direct Action against these attacks

REVOLT, REBEL, RESIST!

Produced by Nottingham Claimants for an Occupation of the Restart Offices on April 11th

FIGHT FOWLER'S WORKFARE SCHEME

POLISH WORKERS STRIKE

As we go to press there is news of a new wave of strikes in Poland against the governments austerity package. Transport, engineering and steel workers have struck demanding massive wage increases for themselves and other workers. Despite massive repression the Polish workers are fighting back against their state capitalist bosses.

EAST AND WEST THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES.

LENINISM OR COMMUNISM (The "Renegade" Kautsky and his Disciple Lenin) by Jean Barrot.

A 'Wildcat' pamphlet available for 40p from *"SUBVERSION"*.

Contact Subversion at

BOX W, c/o Raven Press, 75 Piccadilly, Manchester, England, M1 2BU.

BOX W, c/o 180 Mansfield Road, Nottingham.

review

Animal Liberation

ANIMAL LIBERATION - A Case of Moral Indignation?

40p from B&B c/o The Unemployed Centre, Prior House,6 Tilbury Place, Brighton. (or from ***"SUBVERSION"***).

This is an excellant criticism of the ideology and practice of the Animal Liberationists from a revolutionary perspective.

The appeal of the ALM is that it appears to present a small, exclusive group solution to the problems created by the fragmenting of the working class in Britain since the early 80's which have made the prospects of revolutionary class conflict seem remote. The heavy sentences of ALM activists proves that the state is committed to crushing the AIM which will force the animal liberationists into further isolation.

Auseful comparison is made between the ALM and CND. While the ALM arose out of disillusion with CND's over optimism and its pathetic symbolic activities and as a reaction to CND's 'middle class' domination, its world view remains, like CND's, essentially liberal, since it starts and ends with the morality of the isolated individual.

Animal liberation is based on altruism as animals unlike human beings do not have the potential to change the world. The demands of the ALM do not therefor, challenge the rule of capital which is the root cause of our problems.The writers even posit a vegan capitalism as a possibillity.

Although animal liberationists ally themselves with other movements such as feminism, black and gay liberation, the basic difference between them is that these other movements are concerned with human beings, who demand that the 'oppressed' must lead their own cause. But the animal liberationists fight on behalf of helpless animals.

The writers do not underestimate the courage and commitment of those involved in the ALM but suggests that they are misguided to devote their efforts to a struggle based on a purely moral response, which threatens to isolate them from the rest of the working class, when their energies could be directed into the resurgent class struggle.

M.O'C.

subversion 1

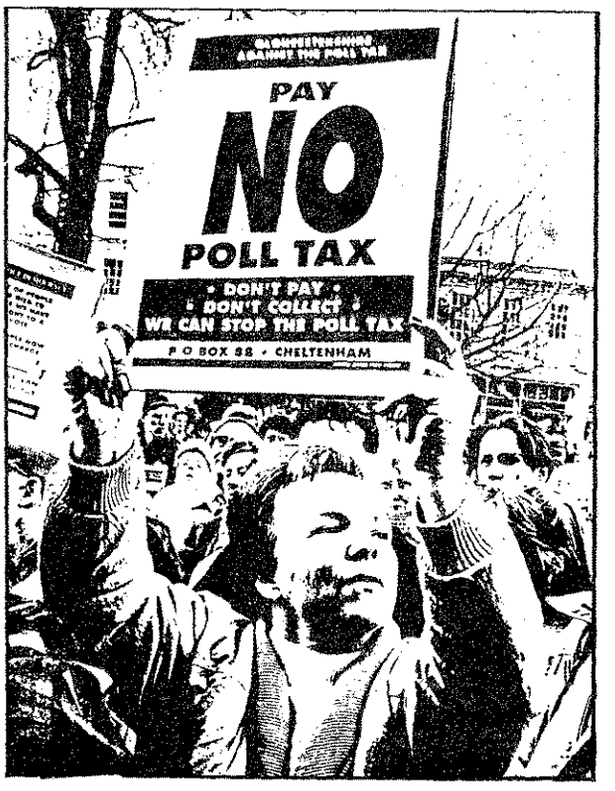
MAY

FREE

STUFF THE POLL TAX!

The Poll Tax has now become a reality for every adult in the country. For working class people it is a savage attack on their living standards. It comes when council rents and mortgage repayments are rocketing and inflation is soaring over 10%.

Together they offer us a stark choice - between paying or going without new clothes, food, holidays or entertainment.



MEDIA LIES

This attack is backed up by media propaganda Lies get published saying non-payers are criminals. They say bailiffs will be sent to steal our belongings. They say non-payers will go to prison. Councils, Labour and Conservative, issue dire warnings and threaten us with prosecution. Labour politicians tell us not to break the law.

SCOTLAND - ONE YEAR ON

Yet in Scotland the Poll Tax came in over a year ago. Over a million people have either refused to pay or are months in arrears.

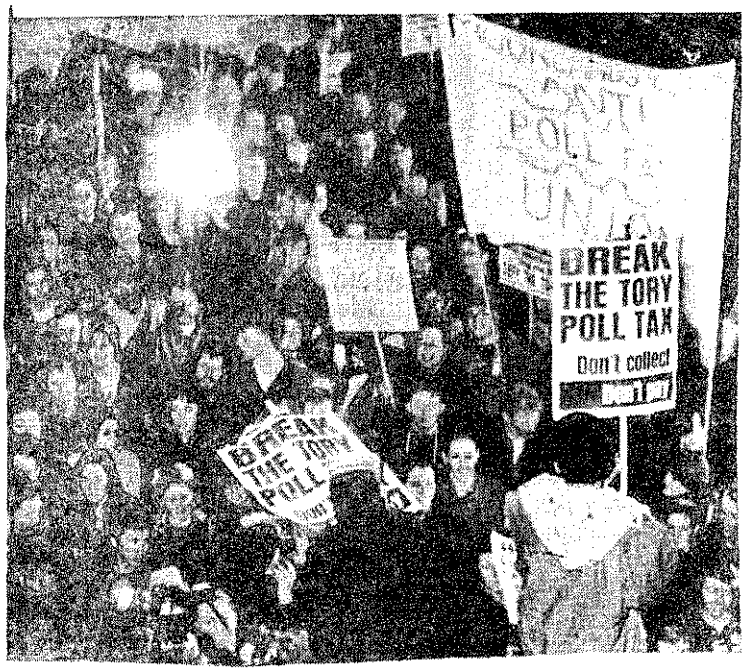
The number of successful prosecutions there can be counted on the fingers of one hand - with a few left over to spare. The truth is that the state cannot cope with the number of law-breakers. The Poll Tax is already in its second year there and it would take the courts over 80 years to deal with non-payers. They know the media and state propaganda is just lies.

FIGHT BACK IN ENGLAND

In the rest of Britian hundreds of thousands of people have demonstrated against the tax. Public meetings continue to attract unheard of numbers of working class people Anti-Poll Tax groups are growing around the country.

→

To beat this tax, workers need to organise together in the areas they live in. ISOLATED INDIVIDUALS CAN EASILY BE PICKED OFF. In Scotland, bailiffs have been driven out of streets and estates. Vulnerable mem bers of our class, like the elderly and the sick, need to be reassured that they will receive the solidarity and support to overcome their fear. We need to organise in our workplaces, too.Employers must be told that their compliance with arrestment of wages orders wiil lead to strikes. Workers in dole offices have to follow the example of London and Scotland and refuse to deduct tax from benefit. Poll Tax redundancies should be fought by strike action - like the teachers are threatening. ONLY BY FIGHTING IN OUR NEIGH-BOURHOODS AND WORKPLACES CAN WE WIN THIS FIGHT.



LABOUR SUPPORTS THE POLL TAX

The fight against the Poll Tax needs to be completely independant of all the political parties. Kinnock and the Labour Party make great play of their opposition to the Poll Tax. They even say they will get rid of it - in 4 or 5 years time! In the meantime they tell us not to break the law and to pay the tax!

Meanwhile, Labour councils are busily send-ing out threatening letters in Scotland. One council, Lothian, even spent £64,000 sending out an additional reminder it wasn't obliged to!

Labout tries to call it a 'Tory Tax'. But Labour councils are queuing up to implement it. Not one council has refused to set a Poll Tax. Nor will they. At stake is their power in the town halls.

LABOUR'S RECORD

Labour's record on the Poll Tax should come as a surprise to nobody. It is totally in line with their record over the years: They've sabotaged every industrial struggle since Thatcher came in - just like they did before. They condemn strikers, telling them not to break the law. It fits their record of evictions, of using troops as police against strikers. It fits their record of wage control and pay freezes. It fits their record of strike-breaking laws. Labour consistently supports the state and capitalism. It doesn't do this because it is led by bad leaders. It does it because it is part of the state and capitalism.

MILITANT AND THE LEFT

Militant and the other left-wing groups want us to elect 'nice' Labour councillors who they say will fight for us. We've seen what Labour's record is. We know what they will do. The fight against this tax is as much against Labour as it is against the Tories. It needs to be single-minded and determined - organised where we live and work, controlled by participants, not politicians.

EAST MEETS WEST

After the tumultuous events which rocked state capitalist Eastern Europe last year, what lies ahead?

POLAND

The nation furthest along the route mapped out by the rulers of Eastern Europe is Poland. There, Deputy Prime Minister, Waldemar Kuczynski promises 'a purging of the economic system of everything that is inefficient: worthless money, unnecessary labour, state monopolies, unprofitable factories.'

Around 250,000 workers have already lost their jobs and an eventual unemployment total of 1.7 million (14% of the workforce) is forecast. State subsidies on staple on staple goods have been withdrawn - the annual inflation rate last year was 800%. Meanwhile, a freeze on wage rises is being enforced. No wonder the shops are brimming with goods - who can afford to buy them?

DEMOCRACY AND STALINISM

The economic programmes of Gorbachev in Russia and of the 'opposition' groups taking office elsewhere in Eastern Europe are all similar to the Polish model. But they are all too aware that such measures can only be carried out with the acquiescence of the working class.

The velvet glove of democracy has replaced the iron fist of Stalinist dictatorship as the means designed to deliver this. Alongside the usual exhortations to make sacrifices for the sake of 'National Salvation', the working class of Eastern Europe is now encouraged to become an interested participant in civil society, through the creation of independent political parties, free elections, a free press and so on.

EMPTY PROMISES

We know through our own experience in the West how empty are the promises held out by the partisans of free market economics and capitalist democracy. The Eastern European working class will undoubtedly learn this too, as the impact of economic reform begins to exact its toll on their conditions of existence. We should endeavour to turn the lowering of physical barriers between East and West into an opportunity to speed up this learning process, by exchanging our ideas and experiences with our comrades in Eastern Europe.

Meanwhile, the path of independent working class struggle, rejecting the idea that all classes in society have an equal interest in the continued health of the state and the economy, is the only road which offers any prospect of progress for the working class, East and West.

public meeting public meeting public meeting public meeting

LABOUR AND THE POLL TAX

FRIDAY 1st JUNE 7.30pm

THE MILLSTONE, THOMAS ST,(off OLDHAM ST)
MANCHESTER CITY CENTRE

all welcome all welcome all welcome all welcome

subversion 1

the riot

The Anti-Poll Tax riot in London on 31st March has been condemned by everyone from Thatcher to Militant. All of them are wedded to the legality of the state. Even Militant will not go beyon non-payment - the idea of people FIGHTING THE POLICE to defend their class interests has left Militant aghast. They even toyed with the idea of grassing rioters up to the police!

We regard such rioting as a positive sign that workers are prepared to break capitalist laws - if all workers were prepared to do that, the Poll Tax wouldn't last five minutes.

WE SUPPORT THE RIOT 100%. The same goes for the 'redistribution of wealth' from the shops in that neighbourhood - capitalist property should be no more respected than capitalist laws.

ABOUT US...

Subversion stands for the abolition of capitalism in all its forms and its replacement by a classless society without money, markets or national boundaries - a society based on production for need and not for profit.

We oppose all movements which are based on the acceptance of capitalism and which just want to 'modify' it in some way, such as trade unions, national liberation movements, movements for 'democratic' reforms or nationalisation.

We support and encourage independent working class struggle. We believe that through this workers will gain the experience and consciousness necessary for the revolution that will destroy capitalism and create the classless society.

If you want more information about ou. group, would like to come to our meetings or would like to take extra copies of this or future bulletins, please fill in the coupon below and return it to Box W, c/o Raven Press, 75 Picadilly, Manchester M1 2BU.

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subversion 2

JUNE

FREE

DOWN WITH POLL TAX
DOWN WITH ALL TAXES

The Poll Tax may be unfair, even on capitalist terms, but that is not the reason we oppose it. We oppose it for the same reason we oppose increases in rent, mortgages and electricity, etc. We oppose it because it is an increase in our cost of living and an attack on our living standards.

We support street organisation of workers resisiting the tax, but we think to be successful this struggle must not be confined there, but needs to extend into the workplace - which is where we are at our strongest.

One way is to whack in large pay demands to take account of the Poll Tax bills. But many of us who are pensioners, unemployed etc. don't have that option.

If a widespread struggle gets underway, based on workplaces and localities, it should include social demands like higher pensions and dole, as well as common wage demands. A good example of this was in Poland a couple of years ago, when striking workers included in their demands raises for some of the sections of the working class who can't easily strike, such as healthworkers.

In the present climate that kind of extension of the struggle is difficult, but it needs to be done.

BEWARE CON (OR LAB, OR LIB DEM) TRICKS

The anti-Poll Tax movement needs to be firmly based on the 'can't pay - won't pay - won't implement' approach. It should not be sidetracked into support for one or other of the supposedly fairer systems of taxation being hawked around by the various political parties.

Any government, whether reformed Tory, Labour, Liberal Democrat or whatever would be forced to try and amke us pay for the economic crisis. Their methods of doing that might vary slightly, that's all. Our job is to resist all of these attacks - not get involved in their debates about the best ways of making us pay.

Compulsory teacher redundancies in Oldham and Surrey draw union protests

Anger over LMS job losses

Up to 30 teachers will be sacked in Oldham and Surrey due to what are thought to be some of the first compulsory redundancies caused by local management of schools, the *TES* has learned.

In addition, a snapshot survey by the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers indicates that other local education authorities may follow suit next week

teachers – staged a protest outside the school on Wednesday.

Three unions, the NASUWT, the National Union of Teachers and the Assistant Masters and Mistresses

school which is making three teachers redundant has asked the Education Secretary, to intervene.

A spokesman for the authority said he "bitterly [illegible]" making any

"It's a confused, m[illegible]ness
I'm piggy in the
Mr John K
gustine's.
to cons[illegible]

lms.. poll tax..

schools fight back

The papers at Easter were full of teachers, the poll tax and Local Management of Schools (LMS). Under the guise of reducing bureaucracy and giving more power to school governors, the government has been busily engaged in a cost cutting operation in schools.

What LMS means is fairly simple. School governors get to hire and fire staff, school budgets are cut and expensive no-redundancy deals are scrapped. The result is equally simple, teacher redundancies and worsening education for our children. Up to the end of May, there have been over 700 teacher redundancies.

NUT CONFERENCE SURPRISE

The National Union of Teachers conference at Easter saw a real surprise. Angry teachers passed a motion calling for strike action in the event of redundancies. The executive - led by Doug McAvoy - were furious, he denounced it as all a 'Militant plot' and said that the union wouldn't abide by the strike call anyway. The executive want to protect their power base, their jobs easy

to protect their power base and the likes of McAvoy their jobs, easy life style and fat salaries. They showed what side they are really on - the bosses. →

THE GUARDIAN
Saturday May 26 1990

Poll tax cap cuts music teachers

Stephen Bates
Education Editor

THE first teacher redundancies following the Government's decision to charge-cap some Labour councils have been announced in Barnsley.

The South Yorkshire authority said yesterday that 24 teachers attached to a music centre and six travelling music teachers would be given redundancy notices to save the authority £181,000 — part of £5.5 million education saving that Barnsley is trying to make as a result of the decision of Chris Patten, the Environment Secretary, to limit its community charge.

The Government wants the charge cut from £329 to £270, producing overall savings of £10 million. A spokesman for Barnsley said: "This is a direct result of government action. We have no soft option."

A spokesman for the National Union of Teachers, which represents some of the teachers,

School jobs to go in cash crisis

By Laurie Bullas

UP TO 10 teachers face redundancy in Oldham because their schools cannot afford to pay them out of new-style budgets.

And four teachers have been told they must leave Woodhey High School, Holcombe Brook, Bury.

THE POLL TAX

The Poll Tax just makes everything worse. It too cuts government spending. Councils were desperate to keep the tax as low as possible. Education is local government's largest expenditure, and salaries make up 70-80% of that. So, once again jobs must go - those of teachers and other education workers.

Councils have threatened redundancies in Nottinghamshire, Cambridge, Barnsley, Oldham and Bury. Teachers have long been under threat in Bradford.

STRIKES

Strikes have already taken place in Bradford and Barnsley - where up to one tenth of teaching jobs are under threat. Other areas are talking of taking action.

To follow the line of the NUT Executive is a recipe for defeat. They don't really want a strike at all, but they have said they'll go along with token local strikes. Strikes kept local can be defeated locally.

NEW TACTICS NEEDED

If teachers are to have any chance of success, they are going to have to adopt completely new tactics.

Their first response to redundancies should be to hold meetings of all the staff in the school with a view to immediate Strike action. Action should be taken regardless of what union the redundant workers happen to be in.

Action needs to spread beyond the confines of the schools in an authority. It must link up with other council workers who are also under threat. As the teachers at the Easter conference realised, the action needs to break out of the boundaries of local authorities.

If these redundancies are lost this time, next year will see open season on education jobs.

PUBLICATIONS

CLASS WAR ON THE HOME FRONT

A pamphlet originally published by the now defunct WILDCAT group. It details revolutionary working class opposition to the second world war. It takes the form of reprints from SOLIDARITY, the journal of the ANTI-PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNIST FEDERATION, one of the few groups in Britain to consistently advocate and report class struggle against the war effort.
Price £1.50 (inc p&p)

BEATING THE POLL TAX
Published by the Anarchist Communist Federation.
Price 70p (inc p&p)

NOTES ON THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE USSR
Published by SUBVERSION. Details working class struggle against Soviet State Capitalism.
Price 70p (inc p&p)

THE STATE AND CAPITAL IN JAPAN
Published by Subversion. Explains why Japanese capitalism isn't the triumph of free competition Thatcher claims it to be.
Price £1.20 (inc p&p)

DID YOU KNOW?

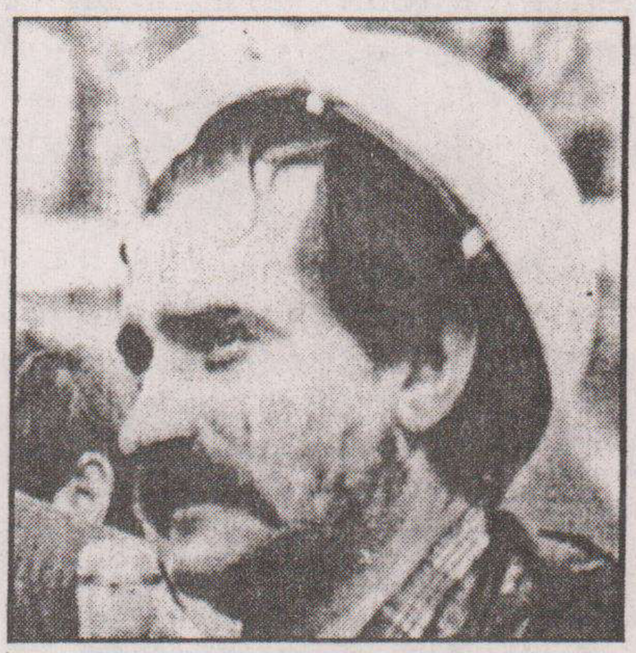
NALGO, NUPE + POLL TAX

Workplace resistance to the poll tax is essential but we can't rely on the unions. Whilst unions like NALGO & NUPE, who manage many local authority workers on the bosses behalf, have paper policies in opposition to the poll tax, in practice they are co-operating with the councils to implement it. If they have any differences with the council bosses it's only that the councils are not charging enough! Manchester NALGO for instance argued for a minimum charge of £450 instead of the councils already huge £425. That kind of "opposition" we can do without!

ESTATE AGENTS

We know for a fact that Fielding's, a well-known Manchester estate agent, is passing on the names and addresses of its clients to the poll tax authorities. Who else is doing the same? Be on your guard.

POLAND

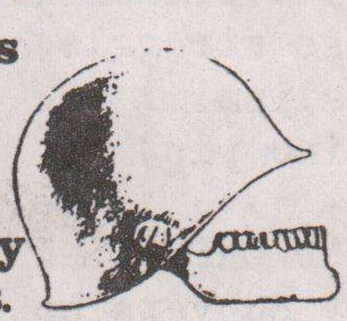


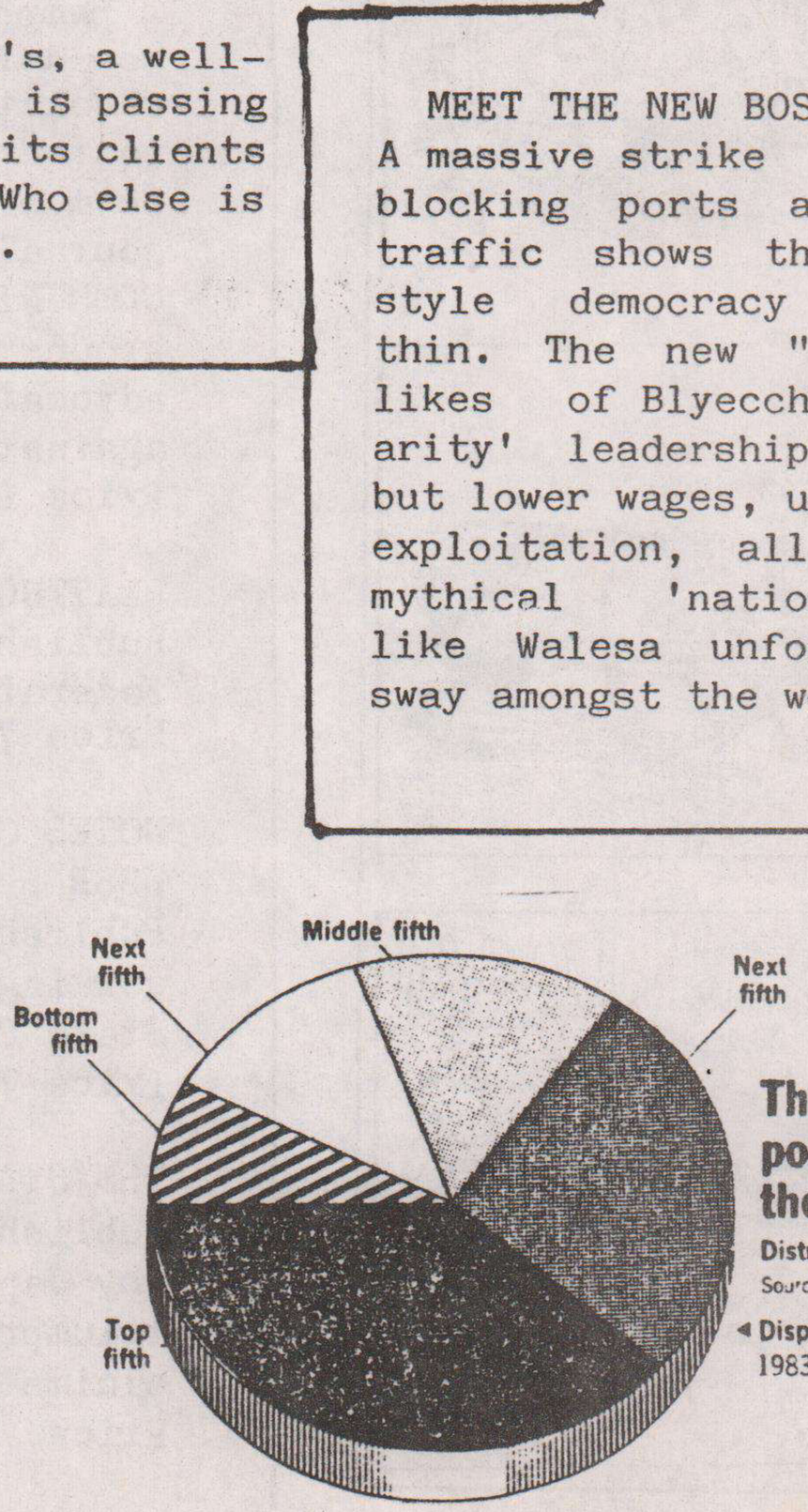
A SCAB

MEET THE NEW BOSS, SAME AS THE OLD BOSS
A massive strike of Polish railway workers blocking ports and disrupting commercial traffic shows that illusions in western style democracy are already wearing thin. The new "freedoms" touted by the likes of Blyecchhh Walesa and the 'Solidarity' leadership are shown to be nothing but lower wages, unemployment and increased exploitation, all in the name of some mythical 'national interest'. Creeps like Walesa unfortunately still have some sway amongst the workers. But not for long!

The money required to provide adequate food, water, education, health and housing for everyone in the world has been estimated at $21 billion a year. It is a huge sum of money

...about as much as the world spends on arms every two weeks.





The rich get richer and the poor, poorer: who has what percentage of the country's income?

Distribution of household income by quintile groups
Source Central Statistical Office, from *Family Expenditure Survey*, UK

◀ Disposable income
1983

subversion

ABOUT US...

class struggle and revolution

Subversion stands for the creation of a world without states, classes, money and wages, where production will be undertaken not for profit but to directly satisfy all human needs.

Some people describe this as "utopian". In one sense this is true: such a society does not exist anywhere, and never has. But we reject the "utopian" label if it implies that our goal has no connection with present-day reality.

The question of how to connect the day-to-day struggles we engage in now with the future society we desire has long been a subject of controversy among political groups.

Some organisations engage in the class struggle in order to recruit members to their party, with the aim of eventually becoming strong enough to seize power. We oppose such groups. We do not set ourselves up as generals, directing the rest of the working class into battle. A genuine and successful revolution can only be carried out by vast masses of working class people consciously organising and leading themselves.

Besides, in the unlikely event that such groups did succeed in seizing power, the likely outcome would be a so-called "worker's state" (with them in power), in which we would find ourselves working for "socialist" bosses, being paid "socialist" wages, and so on. If they share our future goal at all - and in most cased they don't - it is only as a distant mirage which continually recedes in the face of endless "transitional periods".

LEON TROTSKY - FAILED SOCIALIST BOSS

CONVERTS FOR SOCIALISM?

Other organisations, who we acknowledge do share the same aim as us, and who do not see themselves as saviours of the working class, nevertheless treat this vision of the future society as some kind of philosophical ideal. They seek to 'convert' individual members of the working class until eventually there are enough 'believers' to turn this ideal into reality.

When members of such engage in the class struggle, it is their identity as individual members of the working class, rather than as revolutionaries, which prevails. They regard the present day class struggle as necessarily limited and defensive, in no way connected to the future revolutionary attack on capitalism. They thus end up actively defending organisations such as the trade unions whose very purpose is to contain the class struggle within the terms set by capitalism. →

subversion

CLASS STRUGGLE AND REVOLUTION....

BREAKING WITH NORMALITY

By contrast, the starting point of our approach to the class struggle is the view that the seeds of the future struggle for communism are contained within the working class's struggles of today.

The types of working class resistance to the attacks of capitalism we support, like strikes, riots, organising against the Poll Tax, and so on, all interrupt the routine of capitalist 'normality'. In overcoming the practical problems which crop up in the course of these actions, those working class people actively involved find themselves having to develop their own collective solidarity, imagination, initiative and organisation. The development of these powers - all stifled by capitalism - is essential for the working class if it is to transform society.

COLLECTIVE STRUGGLE

By changing people's immediate material conditions, collective struggle also contains the potential to alter people's perceptions of the society around them, and place in a new perspective the limited goals they originallt set themselves. All of these things can be observed, to varying degrees, whenever working class people take action together to fight back against the miseries heaped on them by capitalism.

TRANSFORMING SOCIETY

The wider the struggle, the greater the potential for the development of new forms of organisation directly controlled by those involved in the struggle, and the greater the potential for the development of radical ideas not confined merely to tinkering with society as it is but with the ambition of completely transforming it.

A CLASSLESS SOCIETY

Our approach is thus materialist: it is based on the working classes' struggle in pursuit of its material interests, and recognises that the source of revolutionary ideas and the means to turn these ideas into reality is the working class's active engagement in the class struggle.

This is the seed that will flower into the classless society, a society where all humanity is at last in control of its own destiny, can fulfill its desires and can achieve its true potential.

If you want more information about our group, would like to come to our meetings or would like to take extra copies of this or future bulletins, please fill in the coupon below and return it to Box W, c/o Raven Press, 75 Picadilly, Manchester M1 2BU.

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SOCIALIST BOSSES

subversion 3

FREE

MANDELA V WORKING CLASS

If you thought Nelson Mandela was a great heroic leader of the oppressed masses of South Africa who, now risen like Christ after 27 years in the underworld and poised to lead said masses, if not to life everlasting, at least to freedom in the here and now, you might be a little (zzled.

Surely that can't be right. Mandela condemning the schools boycott and 'ordering' students back to school. Mandela supporting the use of South African state forces to suppress riots. Mandela and de Klerk singing each others praises. Etc.etc. What's going on?

If you were surprised by all this, it's because you didn't realize what the ANC was all about. The ANC has always been a capitalist organisation.

THE STRUGGLE IN SOUTH AFRICA

The working class in South Africa is probably the strongest on the continent, and has been increasingly showing this strength in the last few years.

There have been major strikes by both coal and gold miners, in the hospitals and on the railways. This in addition to the resistance in the squatter camps, the rent strikes and school boycotts. All of these struggles are a shining example to workers everywhere and show that the workers in South Africa are among the most anvanced in the world in combativity. However, they face a serious threat from the ANC.

THE CLASS NATURE OF THE ANC

The ANC is one of many similar groups around the world, such as the PLO, IRA, SWAPO, Sandinistas etc. who claim to be fighting against oppression and for, usually, 'national liberation'. All of these organisations are simply the latter-day equivalents of the nationalist, bourgeois democratic movements of the historical period following the French Revolution. At that time the emerging capitalist powers needed an ideology which would bind the whole population to the ruling class. They found it in the idea of the 'nation' - a unity of both rulers and ruled, oppressors and oppressed, capital-

..... back page →

a meeting of Bromsgrove District Council on Tuesday to win the reinstatement of

bers of Croydon social services for the mentally handicapped to win the

ming pools ... east London, were on strike for two days last week, the first strike in

...shire social services resulted in a partial victory. All scale one clerical

ballot for ... last week's NALGO mass meeting, activists in Hal... ingey council, ... nort...

COUNCIL WORKERS

All over the country small groups of public sector workers have been striking, occupying council buildings, demonstrating and protesting against the impact of cuts in their workplaces.

Against the background of a deepening economic crisis, a combination of grant cuts, changes in housing and education finance, competitive tendering and of course the poll tax is pushing all councils, of whatever political flavour, onto the offensive against their workers.

As each of these attacks has come along the unions have argued for co-operation with the employers and "saving our strength" for the bigger battles to come. But each decision to co-operate has simply weakened and demoralised us further. Only when councils have tried to make cuts "without fully consulting the unions" have those unions protested. Some token consultations conceded and they have soon been satisfied. They have then united with the employers in trying to squash any flames of militant resistance by sections of workers most affected by the latest round of cuts.

Many of the small groups of workers now taking action to defend their interests have in previous years, or even months, voted at union meetings for co-operation with the employers, only to find now exactly what that means in terms of job losses, cuts in services, and reductions in working conditions. This apparent contradiction is being exploited for all it's worth by the unions who wave the flag of "democracy" against anyone who refuses to co-operate, implying that these 'refuseniks' are "out of step" or "on their own". The unions deliberately hide the widespread nature of the anger and revolt that is building up, hoping to keep each section of workers isolated and under their control.

But workers are learning to combat these union manoeuvres. In Barnsley for instance thousands of teachers went on a wildcat strike against job cuts despite all

sorts of dire threats from both the employers and the unions.

We have to understand that whilst the immediate causes of particular disputes might vary - poll tax capping in one place, privatisation in another, grant cuts elsewhere etc. - that these are all part of one co-ordinated employers offensive. If we are not to be worn down by endless rearguard sectoral disputes, attempts must be made to link all the main disputes together in a single fight against the cuts.

That doesn't mean passing resolutions appealing to the union 'leaderships' to organise something or sitting on our arses waiting for the next 'big' fight. It means using the time released by being on strike to go directly to other workers involved, or in dispute themselves, and arguing for combined and united action. It means controlling any strike ourselves through regular mass meetings, which cut across union and sectoral divisions, and directly elected strike committees.

In this way we can turn the current defensive actions into an offensive against the employers and the government and take a small step towards building the confidence, solidarity and organisation necessary to take on the whole rotten system.

It's time to fight

THE UNION'S CAMPAIGN

As Manchester City Council goes about implementing the government cuts a number of small disputes have arisen in the libraries, housing departments and elsewhere over things like collection of the poll tax, covering for vacancies and so on. In each case the union (NALGO) has sought to keep them isolated and avoid any generalised resistance to the cuts. Their job has been made easier because the majority of workers have previously been persuaded to co-operate with the Labour council rather than oppose them outright.

When you consider the effects of the current cuts this seems surprising, so how did the union pull it off? Basically they manipulated the membership in the following way:-

1. First of all they called a mass meeting early in the year before the practical effects of the cuts were widely known.

2. They deliberately kept the membership ignorant of those effects.

3. They suggested mass redundancies around the corner but only if the council wouldn't negotiate seriously to "sort things out". This tactic combined fear with an easy way out.

4. They made militant sounding noises about strikes but only to secure negotiations not actually against the cuts themselves.

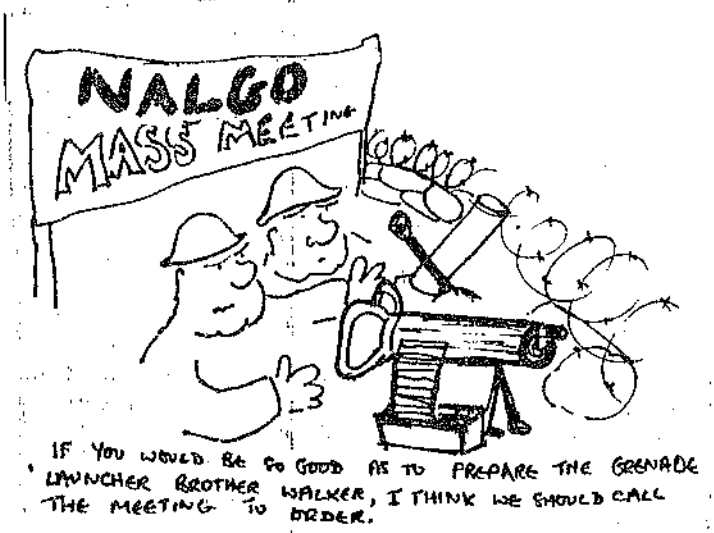
5. They warned that total opposition to the council and the poll tax would leave us isolated. This was a self-fulfilling prophecy to the extent that other union exec's elsewhere were saying the same thing

6. They also warned against being provoked into 'precipitate' and 'futile' action by politically motivated groups like the SWP, who are generally not very popular (conveniently ignoring their own political motives in supporting the Labour Party mainstream!).

7. They had their own ready made, glossy 'do nothing' campaign against those who argued for non-implementation.

8. And of course they controlled the meeting in the usual biased way towards the platform, restricting opposition speakers and resolutions.

This combination enabled them to get a majority in favour of their line, although a substantial minority refused to be brow-


NALGO
MASS MEETING
IF YOU WOULD BE SO GOOD AS TO PREPARE THE GRENADE LAUNCHER BROTHER WALKER, I THINK WE SHOULD CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER.

beaten. That majority vote is now ritually produced anytime someone argues for spreading some action against the cuts. So far their tactics have worked, but they can't keep the lid on the growing anger amongst council workers forever. We must turn the increasing number of small streams of resistance into an irresistable tide of opposition.

GERMAN UNITY

cont'd

main concern of the East German working on the other hand is simply a straightforward struggle to obtain the basic necessities of life, with the cost of rents and basic food-stuffs such as milk and bread now doubling and tripling in price.

The strikes may be over for the time being, but worsening economic conditions will force the East German working class to resume and intensify its fight - as the ruling class know only too well. On 1st July the Sunday Correspondent reported that "East Germany's Minister of the Interior, Peter Michael Diestel, is taking no chances given all the uncertainties surrounding monetary union in the East. He has anounced plans to equip the East German police with more effective anti-riot gear". Let's hope his lack of faith in the subservience of the East German working class is fulfilled beyond his wildest nightmares...

Welcome to freedom — you're fired

Ever since the Berlin Wall was breached back in November, the West German stock markets have been booming in anticipation of the profits to be reaped from investment across the border in East Germany. On the other side of the class divide, however, the prospects look none too bright for the East German workers who will be expected to produce this wealth.

The West German Economics Minister Helmut Haussman stressed recently that it was "essential for investment that over the next three to five years low wages and longer working hours prevail in East Germany."

Even so, during the next six months up to a third of all East German enterprises are expected to go out of business, unable to sell their products in competition with the more glamorous and better quality goods produced in West Germany.

As a result, the level of unemployment in East Germany, currently standing at around 224,000 or 2.5%, is widely predicted to rise to as much as 1½ or 2 million, out of a workforce of around 9 million. As many workers again are expected to be put on to short-time working, while hundreds of thousands could be forced to migrate in search of work.

On 2nd July, the first working day of monetary union, the Business Page of the Guardian reassured its readers that "Trade union leaders are issuing ritual warnings of strikes" (surprise, surprise!) "but there is no tradition in either part of Germany of wildcat stoppages."

This assertion was immediately proved wrong as that very same day 28,000 workers from 26 factories in and around East Berlin staged 3-hour walkouts. Demonstrations and staged 3-hour walkouts. Demonstrations and wildcat strikes continued for the next fortnight, involving at their height around 120,000 workers, concentrated mainly in the metal and electrical industries.

The demands formulated during these actions were for:

- a guarantee of no redundancies for the next two years;
- a reduction in working hours from 43 to 40 hours a week; and
- pay rises of up to DM400 (£137) a month (current metal and electrical industry wages in East Germany are around DM250 or £86/week).

The deal eventually negotiated to end the strikes fell short of meeting these demands. True, a 40 hour week was granted, but such a figure is purely nominal, because, like everywhere else, many workers have to put in extra hours in overtime to make ends meet. A guarantee of no job losses was extended only to next summer while the maximum pay rises granted were DM300 (£103) a month.

It is interesting to note that this settlement was negotiated by the West German-based trade union IG Metall, which has been busy setting up branches in East Germany. Their main interest has been in extending their own bureaucratic control over a section of the German working class who no longer trust their 'own' unions. In the process they have sought to stabilise the situation for capitalism in Germany.

While this is the union's primary reason for getting involved in East Germany, the

..... p.3 =>

ABOUT OURSELVES

THE REVOLUTIONARY SCENE IN BRITAIN

'SUBVERSION' is published by a small group of revolutionaries based in the north of England. We started working together in 1988 after the dissolution of the old 'Wildcat' group.

Though small in number, we are not alone in some of the basic political views we express.

We share with a number of other groups and publications the common objective of a new, genuinely communist society, based on production directly for use (not profit); the abolition of the state and national frontiers along with the whole money-wages system; and the establishment of a world community.

We also share our opposition to: -

1. The Labour Party and its Trotskyist hangers-on as the left wing of capitalism.

2. Nationalisation and co-operatives as variations of capitalist property relations

3. The Unions as the capitalist enemy 'within' the working class.

4. 'National Liberation' as the ideology of would be new rulers.

Included amongst these groups and publications in this country are: -

'RED MENACE' published by the RM collective BM WILD, London wc1n 3xx.

'ORGANISE' published by the Anarchist Communist Federation.
p.o. Box 263, Sheffield S1 3EX.

'WILDCAT' (New Series) published by the new, London based group using the name 'wildcat' BM CAT, London wc1n 3xx.

'THE COMMUNIST BULLETIN' published by the Communist Bulletin Group. Box CBG c/o Boomtown Books, 167 King st, Aberdeen.

'WORKERS VOICE' published by the Communist Workers Organisation. BM Box CWO, London wc1n 3xx.

We don't agree with everything that appears in these publications. Much of the material is still weighed down by a lot of irrelevant historical baggage and political jargon.

Groups like the C.W.O. and the C.B.G. are still hung up on outdated Leninist notions. The C.W.O. in particular still has fantasies about transitional societies where capitalist property relations are overseen by 'workers' states', an idea which would be EXTREMELY DANGEROUS for the working class if it ever became accepted in a future revolutionary situation.

The new 'Wildcat' group is obsessed with opposition to anything remotely 'democratic' to the point of applauding every violent minority action within the working class as a major step forward.

The A.C.F./Organise are still unable to make a firm break from the rest of the Anarchist scene , which remains dominated by a mish-mash of liberal and leftist ideas and are obsessively anti-marxist.

Despite all this, we are sure our readers will be able to gain something by applying a critical eye to these publications. For all their faults they are light-years ahead of anything else you might pick up on the radical fringe!

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PUBLIC MEETING

WELCOME TO FREEDOM--YOUR SACKED!

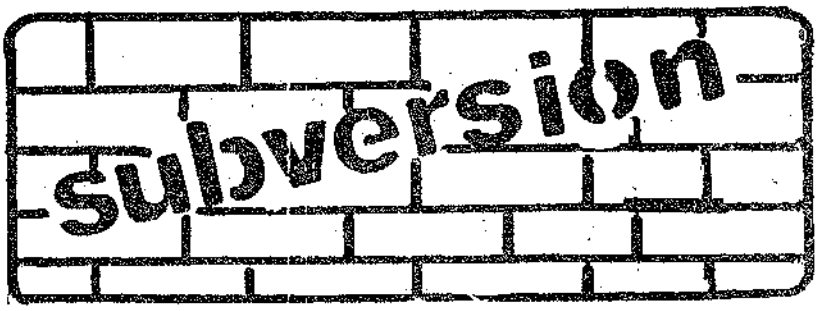
THE CRISIS IN EASTERN EUROPE

7.45 pm Friday 21st September 1990

Upstairs. 'The Millstone' pub.
Thomas St., via Shudehill or Hilton St or Oldham St, Manchester city centre.

ALL WELCOME. PLENTY OF TIME FOR DISCUSSION

...MANDELA



ists and workers who, because they lived in the same area of land and spoke the same language, supposedly were a single unit with a single interest.

THE BIGGEST CON IN HISTORY

It has worked well for the capitalists. The ideology of nationalism has always meant that the working class has accepted the aims and interests of its exploiters, the capitalist class, as though they were its own. It is perhaps the biggest con in history.

Today, capitalism is dominant throughout the world, but there are always conflicts between rival capitalist powers large and small, both between countries and between different factions within a single country. The weaker capitalist factions make use of the same old lies about democracy and 'national liberation', usually coupled with the left-wing capitalist policy of Nationalisation, i.e. direct state control - thus the rhetoric of these groups like the ANC, PLO etc.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

When they come to power the result is always the same. They get on with the business of running capitalism and exploiting the working class.

When the MPLA, Frelimo, Zanu, Sandinistas etc. came to power the masses discovered the same thing they did after the French Revolution - plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose (the more it changes, the more it stays the same).

When the ANC comes to power it will be exactly the same, only they're being a bit more obvious about it than most. This is because of the dovetailing of interests between them and the Nationalist Party at this moment in history.

MENE MENE TEKEL UPARSIN

The growing world economic crisis has hit South Africa badly - especially since the greater part of the international capitalist class has mounted the campaign of sanctions (this latter because they can see the writing is on the wall for the Apartheid regime, and they want to get in the good books of the non-racial regime whose accession to power is only a matter of time anyway). The more intelligent and forward looking faction of the white bourgeoisie, represented mainly by the Nationalist Party, realizes that a non-racial capitalism is necessary - and as this is also the aim of the ANC, hence the increasingly pally relationship.

For the working class, in South Africa as elsewhere, no form of capitalism, whatever fancy phrases it uses, will change the relationship between exploiters and exploited - it will just be an exchange of one lot of exploiters for another.

THE WORKING CLASS ALTERNATIVE

The working class must not allow itself to be conned by the ANC's version of capitalism. Our class can only free itself by abolishing wage-labour itself and taking the means of production - the factories, mines, land etc. - into its own hands, running them collectively for the collective needs of society. This is the basis of what we call Communism. In contrast to the widespread use of the term Communism to mean state-capitalism, as in the Eastern Bloc, we mean a classless society without national boundaries, without inequalities or oppressions, where money, markets and commodity production have been abolished and replaced by production for need, with free access for all. It will be the first genuinely free society in history. To achieve this genuine liberation, the working class must fight resolutely against all factions of capitalism. The ANC is just one more gang of capitalists confronting us

DOWN WITH DE KLERK
DOWN WITH MANDELA

FORWARD TO COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

subversion!

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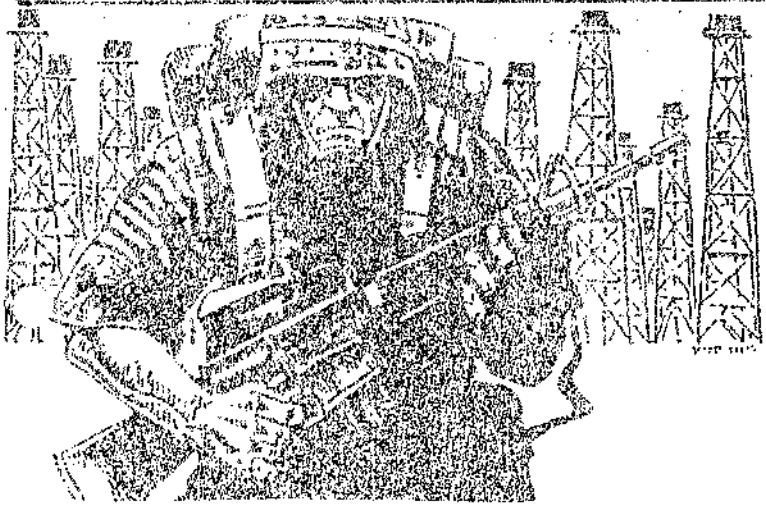


NO WAR

As each day goes by the crisis in the Gulf gets worse. As each day goes by the language used gets stronger. Talk becomes action. Sanctions and blockades are enforced. Thousands starve in desert camps. Hostages are taken. Resisters are hanged. Children die.

Each side is stirring up feelings. They are preparing their populations for the shooting war that is to come. For us, one thing is clear: Whatever either side says, This war is not worth one drop of workers' blood. It is a bosses' war - being prepared to fight for bosses' interests.

WHY WAR?

Iraq is broke. The Iran war left it $80 billion+ in debt. The population is prone to strikes, the army mutinies. Iraq owed Kuwait billions. What better way to solve its problems than to invade its major creditor? Even better to gain control of 20% of the world's oil!

The U.S. and the West depend on imported oil. They are on the edge of an economic recession and are terrified of another oil crisis. This war gives them the chance to gain long sought after bases in the Gulf.

The interests of both sides are the same - safeguarding profits, defending capital. These are the bosses' interests.

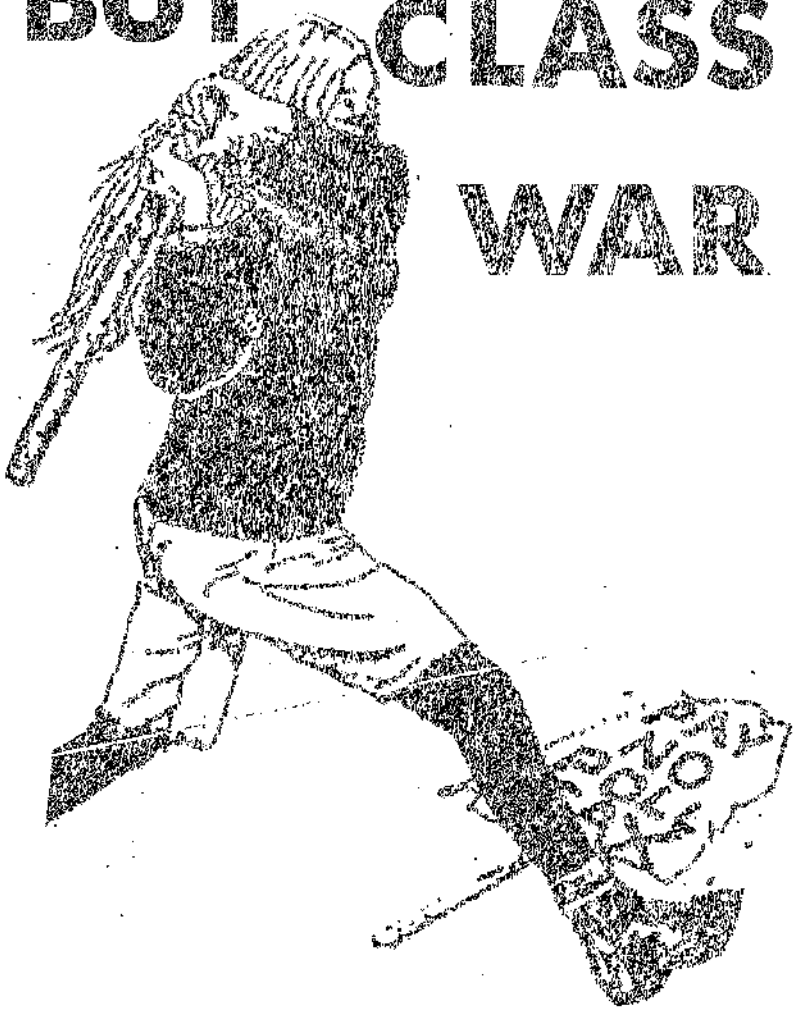
SO WHO LOSES?

Who will die if there is war? Thousands of Kuwaiti workers and poor immigrant workers caught in the crossfire. Thousands of Iraqi and Saudi workers in their homes. Thousands of young workers either conscripted into armies or forced in to find a job. Saddam, Bush, Thatcher, the Emirs will all be safe and well.

Workers will lose here and in the Gulf. Our interests are the same here as in Iraq. Higher wages, better living conditions, the end of oppression.

We say, down with both sides. Intensify the class struggle here and in Iraq. Push forward with pay claims, fight the Poll Tax, sabotage the war drive.

BUT CLASS WAR



'our arthur' or 'ourselves'?

Faced with a barrage of attacks on Arthur Scargill by the government, coal bosses and the media, the left has been rallying to his defence. Everyone from the Labour Party left through the S.W.P. to 'Class War' has been furiously campaigning on his behalf. So why are we less than enthusiastic about joining in on either side?

UNION BOSSES

There is no doubt that Scargill is a thorn in the side of the bosses' attempts to re-structure the coal industry along with the Unions and the Labour Party. He is an "old style" Union boss but a Union boss none-the-less!

ILLUSIONS

It is an illusion that Scargill represents militant, class conscious self-organisation, but an illusion held by many bosses and workers alike.

Defence of the Unions is NOT the same any more as defence of working class interests. In fact as the economic crisis gets worse, the Unions' role in dividing workers, containing class struggle and generally managing wage-labour on behalf of the bosses and the state becomes more prominent.

All the current debates are about how best they can do this, and what degree of independence the Unions should have in carrying out this role.

RHETORIC AND REALITY

We must not be fooled by the rhetoric of Union bosses.

There are many situations where they need to sound very militant in order to contain struggles.

The present disputes on the North Sea oil rigs is an example of this and the last big miners' strike was exactly the same.

FOLLOWING SCARGILL TO DEFEAT

Scargill didn't start the strikes then, but he sought to put himself at the head and to maintain himself as the 'man in charge', best able to mediate with the bosses and the state.

The need at the time was to deepen and EXTEND the struggle beyond the mines, on the basis of common demands, to other workers. In

addition miners needed to take full control of the struggle themselves. Scargill did much to stop this happening in practice.

Firstly, he presented the strike as in defence of the 'Plan for Coal', itself a recipe for job losses and productivity hikes. He insisted throughout the early part of the strike at least, that miners could "go it alone". Solidarity was to be limited to financial assistance and token strikes and demonstrations.

All his clever manipulation of accounts to avoid sequestration may have stopped money going to the state, but it also stopped it getting into the hands of local pickets and solidarity groups.

Much is made of Scargill's support (through the I.M.O.) of international class struggle but this ignores his support for the state capitalist regimes of Eastern Europe against the workers there.

SCARGILL'S OBJECTIVES AND OURS

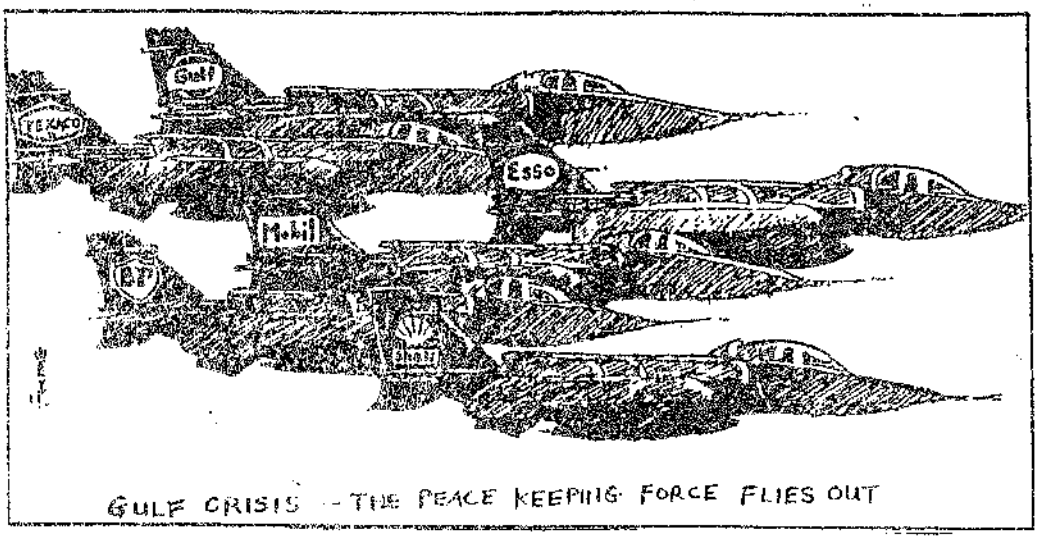
Scargill may be against the Tories, but he is for a state capitalist system in which the Unions would play an even bigger role in managing industry and the exploitation of our class.

There is no reason why we cannot refute the lies of the media about the N.U.M. and their underlying attacks on working class solidarity, without getting sucked into support for left wing Union bosses and their false solutions to our problems!

FOR OURSELVES NOT FOR ARTHUR!

Gang Warfare in the Gulf

OIL WARS



GULF CRISIS - THE PEACE KEEPING FORCE FLIES OUT

THERE ARE TWO GULFS currently looming before the working class. One is the geographical gulf which threatens to be the centre of an immense killing ground, whose dry sands will drink the blood of vast numbers of working class people sent, as ever, to die in the name of an illusion. The other is the great gulf between reality and the aforementioned illusion, or illusions, for the gangsters who rule the world, and fight among themselves like vampires vying over our blood, our sweat, our life-energy present us with a choice.

Firstly, there is the view which emanates from America and its allies, which requires us to believe that the forces they have sent to the Gulf are the upholders of civilization and righteousness against one who has suddenly revealed himself as a shameless outlaw, a new Hitler who must be stopped in the name of all that is right and proper.

Secondly, the view which keens its siren song into the ears of many Arab workers, to the effect that Saddam Hussein is leading a glorious war of resurgence of the Arab Nation against Western Imperialism, after whose defeat everything will be just fine.

And thirdly, the Leftist echo of the previous view, which holds that Imperialism is far more iniquitous than plain ordinary capitalism and anyone who, in the hallucinations of the Leftists, is fighting against it should be supported, and anyway, all "nations" have a "right" to "self-determination". The above views all have variations, adding to the richness of our choice.

GANGSTERS FALL OUT

The reality is that ALL the participants in this conflict are a vile bunch of thieves and gangsters who have fallen out over the spoils of their exploitation of us, the working class. The notion that we who are the victims of these Al Capones, these Legs Diamonds, these Corleones writ large who are the rulers of the nations of the world should take sides with any of them is the very pinnacle of idiocy.

These gangsters, however, as we have already intimated, are skilled in the construction of fantastic tapestries of illusion which they substitute for reality in the minds of all of us who have not yet learned to see them for what they are. But the ghostly fingers that tugged at us in a darkened room stand revealed as filthy cobwebs once the light is switched on.

THE REALITY BEHIND THE SPECTACLE

Let us look in more detail at these lies. It is not, perhaps, necessary to spend too much time on the Western view (shared also by what was the Eastern Bloc, now). The foul hypocrisy of those who staunchly

supported Saddam Hussein and his regime for years and scarecely blinked at the latter's genocide in Halabja, for instance, only "discovering" Hitlerian tendencies when the growing world economic crisis threw former friends at each other's throats in the scramble for a dwindling "take", will be starkly obvious to those who have seen through right-wing capitalist lies. But capitalism has more than one string to its bow - the left-wing of capitalism even pretends not to be capitalism.
We will discuss the lies of the nationalist third-world bourgeoisie and those of the Leftists together for, as we have said, the latter are merely the junior partners of the former in most things.

IMPERIALISM OR CAPITALISM?

A whole plethora of governments, movements and grouplets, from the Iraqi government to the most radical of the Trotskyist sects, implores us to "oppose Imperialism" and support Iraq, (although some of them are more coy about that latter part). What then is Imperialism? This is a word which has been defined in many ways, but its main use, for the champions of the Third World, is simply this: If you don't want to oppose capitalism as a whole, if you want to distinguish between "good" capitalists and "bad" capitalists and only oppose the latter, you need some other term under which to group together the people you are opposing. Hence, the larger, dominant powers who are the major block to the agrandizement of the weaker capitalist powers, are called "Imperialists" and the said weaker capitalist powers are alleged to be "fighting Imperialism" when conflict occurs.
This "anti-Imperialism" will usually incorporate an economic analysis of the world as it was nearly a hundred years ago, as though nothing has changed. It was at that time that the Leftists created this "theory of anti-Imperialism" which survives even today.

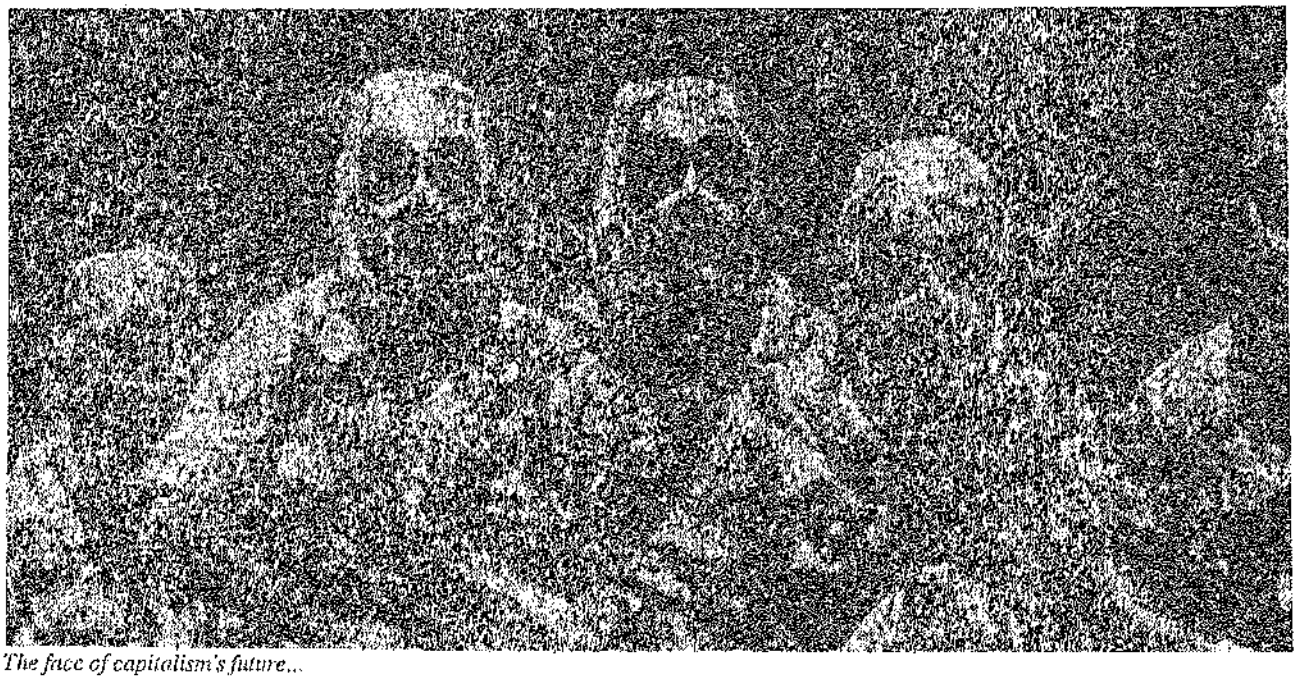
THE OPPORTUNIST THEORY OF ANTI-IMPERIALISM

These Leftists were groups such as the Bolsheviks, whose political programs, despite any radical phraseology they might contain,

consisted in constructing State-Capitalism. Their target areas were the relatively advanced industrial countries, and the adversaries which stood in their path were the existing rulers of those countries' rulers who also had other enemies. One such enemy was the emerging nationalisms which were starting to flex their muscles in what were then mainly colonies. Thus, the Leftist concept of "anti-Imperialism" arose as an opportunist attempt at alliance between various weak capitalist forces against a stronger one.

THE "RIGHT" OF "NATIONS" TO "SELF-DETERMINATION"

This is a concept the Leftists always take refuge in if all else fails. But what does it really mean? A "nation" is an involuntary unit of antagonistic classes - the capitalist class and the working class - the former exploiting and oppressing the latter. The idea that they are single unit with a single will, a single interest, the idea that they are a single "self" which can have "self-determination", is surely the cleverest fraud that the capitalists have ever devised to make workers forget their own class interests and support the class which oppresses them.
Some Leftists will even admit that nationalism doesn't benefit workers but say they have a "right" even if you don't agree with it. Perhaps we should then spend time and energy advocating the "right" of workers to demand longer hours and lower wages? We can treat this "brilliant concept" with the contempt it deserves.



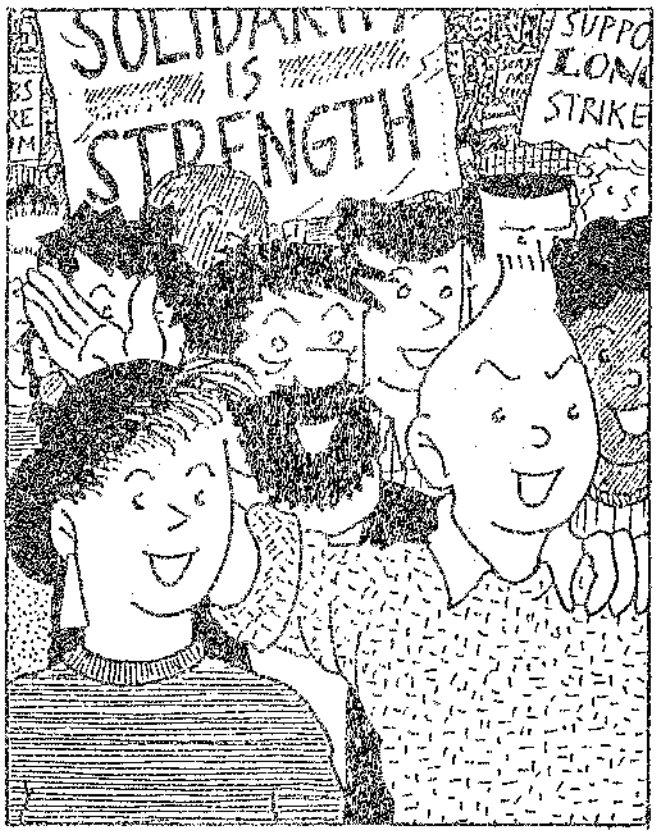
The face of capitalism's future...

A REVOLUTIONARY ANTI-IMPERIALISM

Is there, then, such a thing as Imperialism? Can the working class make use of such a term? This is a very moot point, but we can say that Imperialism, if it means anything real, is simply the inevitable conflict for resources and markets that capitalist powers must engage in when the world has reached a certain stage of historical development. The weaker powers' attempts to resist domination by the stronger ones is aimed at replacing them as dominant powers, not in "defeating Imperialism". The weaker powers are part of what today is an integrated capitalist world - they do thus not stand outside Imperialism but are part of it. Their conflict with the major powers is no more "anti-Imperialist" than the challenge which a young stag mounts against the leader of the herd is aimed at eliminating the system of hierarchy which the nature of such animals entails.
Thus all countries in the world are Imperialist. The term anti-Imperialism is therefore meaningless if used for anything but anti-capitalism

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST CAPITALISM

The working class has no interest whatsoever in aiding any of the factions within the class that is its enemy. Our class must resolutely oppose all the world's states, all the parties, movements and groups which represent one form or other of capitalism. For all the squabbling that takes place between them, they are all heads of the same hydra.
The interest of workers throughout the world lies in overthrowing capitalism and creating a classless society without national boundaries, without wage labour, markets and money, where Humanity produces for its own needs, based on free and equal access for all. Such a society is possible. The struggle to achieve it starts now. Oppose war, in the Gulf or anywhere, intensify class struggle, no war but the class war.



Sale of the century
Cul-de-sac economy

SHATALIN

Why Perestroika will FAIL

Last year, a wave of popular revolutions swept across Eastern Europe, consigning bankrupt communism to the dustbin of history, and ushering in a new age of liberal democracy and free market economics. Or so the ruling class would have us believe...

In fact, communism has not failed in Eastern Europe - it was never established there (or anywhere else). As revolutionaries have long argued, the type of society which developed in the Soviet Union after 1917, and which was then imposed militarily on the rest of Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War, was not communism but state capitalism. **

The idea that the changes taking place in Eastern Europe have been instigated by 'popular revolutions' is also a myth. It's true that mass demonstrations did play a role in giving the final push to the most fossilised Stalinist regimes. But the initiative for political and economic reform originated with the rulers of Eastern Europe, who have also (until now) kept a firm grip on the pace and direction of these reforms.

PERESTROIKA

The economic restructuring ("perestroika") which the rulers in Eastern Europe are seeking to carry out aims to devolve a large degree of responsibility for economic decision-making, away from the central state planning ministries, to the level of the individual enterprises, which are to be transferred to private ownership.

Under the "500 Days" plan drawn up by Stanislav Shatalin for economic reform in the Soviet Union, the state will continue to supply enterprises and place orders for their products. However, the price of these raw materials and finished products will no longer be determined by bureaucratic decree, but through negotiation between the enterprises and the state. Moreover, if the enterprise managers can strike a better deal with alternative suppliers and customers, they will be free to do so.

By loosening the straitjacket of centralised planning and introducing such elements of market choice and competition, the reformers in Eastern Europe hope to provoke a more efficient - in other words, profitable - use of resources. Not least amongst these resources is labour power: economic reform is a means to an end, and this end is ultimately to screw more surplus value out of the working class.

So what are their chances of success? Here the golden future which ruling class commentators say lies ahead for Eastern Europeans begins to look more than a little tarnished.

POPULAR CAPITALISM?

An obvious problem lies in finding investors to buy the enterprises which the

Another day and another queue for bread in Moscow

** For a fuller explanation of this view, see the Subversion discussion paper Capitalism and Class Struggle in the USSR, available from our group address for

THE WAY WE LIVE NOW

"If anyone attempts to hoard tobacco they will be torn to bits"

Fag-end economy leads to near-riots

TEASHEACH! In issue no. 12 of Moscow News.

18 months of misery face Soviet smokers

SEVENTY MILLION Soviets are in a rage because they can't have a smoke and the right rumour might just cause an explosion. But the monetary cigarette crisis was seen coming two years ago and will not be eased until the middle of next month when cigarette factory workers return from their long summer holidays. Meanwhile

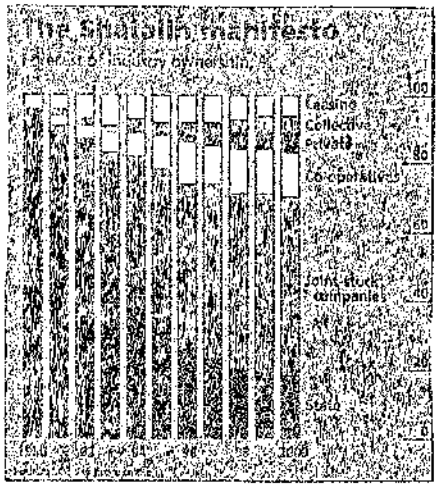
That's the gloomy prediction of [illegible] various states plan to sell off.

The ideology of 'popular capitalism' which has featured in the sale of nationalised industries in Britain is unlikely to catch on in Eastern Europe. In the Soviet Union 45 million people (16% of the population) subsist on or below the official poverty-level income of 80 roubles/month. They won't be rushing out to buy shares when they can barely afford to buy bread.

The value of the state assets to be sold off under the Shatalin Plan amounts to something like 2000 billion roubles. If all wage-earners in the Soviet Union were to purchase equal shares in these enterprises they would have to invest on average 1400 roubles each. As the average monthly wage is 230 roubles, this amounts to six months' pay. Clearly, 'popular capitalism', Soviet-style, won't come cheap.

The large amounts of savings which workers in Eastern Europe are reputed to have stashed away (because there has never been enough consumer goods for them to spend their wages on) are seen by some reformers as a potential source of funds for investment in the privatisation of state-owned enterprises. But Eastern European workers are far more likely to hang on to their savings, as security against an uncertain future. This is what happened in East Germany, where justified fears of unemployment upset the widespread predictions of a spending spree after German monetary union on 1st July.

It seems probable, therefore, that ownership of state enterprises will pass either into the hands of wealthy state bureaucrats (who will become the formal owners of capital which to all intents and purposes they already own anyway); or else into the hands of foreign capitalist investors. But many obstacles stand in the way of the latter possibility.

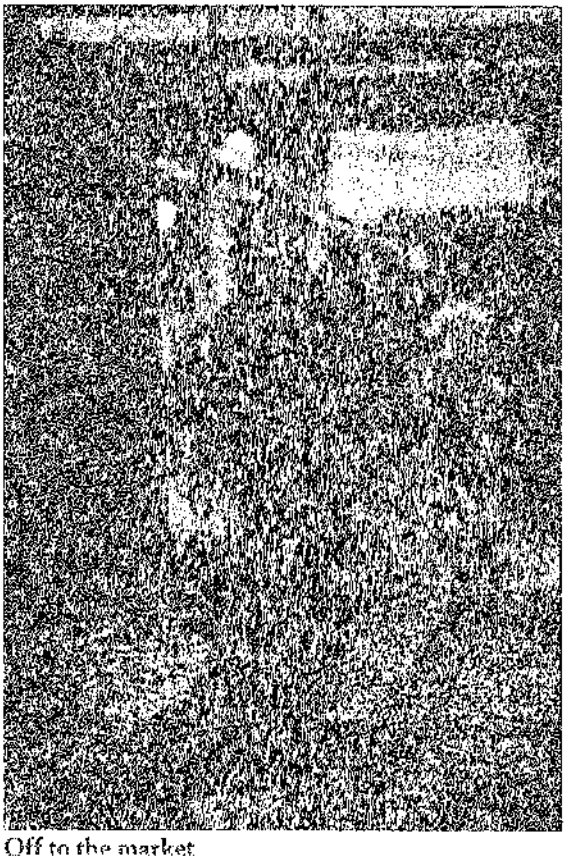


FOREIGN INVESTMENT

When the Berlin Wall was breached in November 1989, the West German stock markets boomed at the prospect of the profits to be reaped from investment in East Germany. But the closer West German capitalists have looked at what's actually on offer, the faster this initial enthusiasm has waned.

An agency called the Treuhandanstalt is in charge of drawing up balance sheets and valuing the assets of East Germany's 8000 state enterprises, before deciding which can be sold and which will have to be shut down. So far the Treuhandanstalt has found it very hard to attract any buyers.

West German chemicals firms researching the potential for investment in what was reputed to be one of the most successful sectors of the East German economy discovered low productivity rates, decrepit factories using



Off to the market

pre-1930s technology, and massive problems with pollution. The only firm offer received by the Treuhandanstalt was from the West German company BASF, which offered to take over a polyurethene plant - but only if it was handed over free and guarantees were issued against any costs arising from past pollution.

Few Western companies seem keen to act as pioneers in the field of East European investment. Until the necessary capitalist infrastructure is set up - tax regimes, contract law, capital markets, environmental and safety regulations, employment law, property rights and so on - investment in Eastern Europe presents a far more risky prospect for the capitalists than investment in southern Europe, S.E. Asia or Latin America.

Significantly, Japanese capital, with its reputation for keeping one jump ahead of its rivals by investing today in areas which will be hugely profitable in 10 or 20 years' time, has so far promised no large-scale investment in Eastern Europe.

In any case, any foreign capital which is invested is more likely to have a destructive effect than an invigorating one on the domestic enterprises of Eastern Europe. A third or more of all East German enterprises are likely to be forced out of business by their inability to sell their products in competition with the better quality and more prestigious goods pouring in from the West.

A similar swathe is likely to be cut through other East European economies the moment they open themselves up to the full blast of foreign competition. One bureaucrat in the Soviet Union has predicted that "about half of Soviet enterprises could not survive in a market economy" (Vladimir Scherbakov, chairman of the State Committee for Labour and Social Affairs, in the Guardian 29.8.1990).

THE COST TO THE WEST

The cost of economic restructuring in Eastern Europe is likely to place a heavy burden on the increasingly shaky economies of Western Europe and the USA.

The West German state is currently pouring billions of DeutschMarks into East Germany to pay for unemployment and other welfare benefits. It's now thought that this will cost DM 100 billion (= £30 billion) per annum for the next few years. Where this money will come from is far from certain. In September the West German Finance Ministry had to abandon an attempt to raise DM 3 billion by auctioning Unity Bonds when all the bids it received were too low.

By the end of August the Treuhandanstalt had underwritten DM 10·2 billion in loans from West German banks to East German enterprises, which have to carry on buying raw materials, paying wage bills and meeting other overheads until their fate is decided by the Treuhandanstalt. Now the banks have been told they must lend the money at their own risk. They are unlikely to welcome this suggestion, since until an enterprise's assets have been valued its creditors have no guarantee of its ability to repay loans.

There is a strong possibility that the extent of the borrowing swallowed up by East Germany will force a rise in West German interest rates (the cost of borrowing money). This in turn would send shock waves through other West European economies - at a time when economic forecasts are already predicting deepening recession.

Nevertheless, the rulers in Eastern Europe remain desperate for Western economic aid, and will go to almost any lengths to obtain it - witness Gorbachev's concessions to Bush at the Helsinki summit over America's role in the Gulf Crisis, in exchange for promises of U.S. aid for the ailing Soviet economy.

COMECON

Imminent changes within the trading organisation COMECON will present another problem for the economies of Eastern Europe. Until now trade has been centrally planned, involving mainly raw materials from the Soviet Union being bartered for finished goods from the rest of Eastern Europe. From 1st January 1991, however, all trade among East European states will take place on a hard currency basis.

The higher the Gulf Crisis pushes up the price of oil, the worse it becomes for the East European states which from 1st January will have to pay the full world market rate for oil from the Soviet Union. The loss of the guaranteed markets organised by COMECON will also hit East European states which currently send anything from 20 to 65% of their total exports to the Soviet Union. Enterprises in these countries will have to find new customers - or else face going out of business.

What has been described as an "economic civil war" has already started to break out among the COMECON partners. Hungarian enterprises have demanded DM 500 million from East Germany as compensation for the cancellation of contracts for goods which East German enterprises say they will now obtain from West Germany. And West Germany will have to pay anything from DM 3 to 6 billion by the end of this year alone to

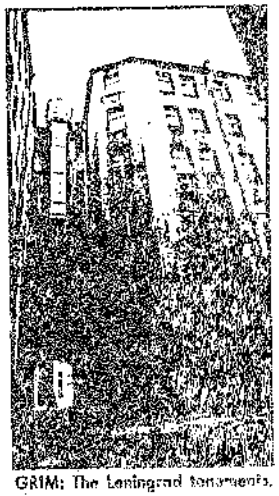
guarantee the Soviet Union delivery of goods it usually obtained from East Germany.

This situation is also likely to be mirrored soon within the Soviet Union itself, when it breaks up into a much looser federation of independent Republics, each with control over the economic resources within its own boundaries.

THE CLASS STRUGGLE

By far the greatest problem facing the ruling class in Eastern Europe, however, is the response of the working class, since the main effects of economic restructuring in the short term are clearly going to be massive increases both in the prices of basic goods and in unemployment.

In Poland the annual inflation rate last year reached 800%. In Czechoslovakia the withdrawal of state subsidies in July immediately doubled the price of food. In East Germany the cost of rents and basic foodstuffs such as milk and bread doubled or tripled after monetary union with West Germany.



GRIM: The Leningrad tenements.

THE WAY WE LIVE

Riots in the streets of Leningrad

NIET CITY

NO vodka NO tobacco
NO petrol NO bread
NO new housing

HUNGER-STRIKE: Young Journos want independence from Komsomol.

RISING FAST: PREDICTIONS OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE SOVIET UNION

"The chairman of the state committee for labour and social issues, Vladimir Shcherbakov, calculates that 35 million could be unemployed if the government adopts the shock therapy applied in Poland.

THE GUARDIAN
29 August 1990

Earlier this year it was reported that eight million were unemployed, and Vladimir Shcherbakov, chairman of the State Committee for Labour and Social Affairs, has warned that introduction of a market economy could lift the total to 40 million.

THE GUARDIAN
14 September 1990

conservative economist Alexei Sergeyev, a member of the Communist Party Central Committee, predicts up to 50 million unemployed, inflation of Latin American proportions – and eventually rioting by a frustrated working class.

THE SUNDAY CORRESPONDENT
16 September 1990

In Czechoslovakia, where there is supposed to be full employment at present, the start of the privatisation programme is expected to result in 5% unemployment just by the end of this year. In Poland an eventual total of 1·7 million unemployed (14% of the workforce) has been forecast. In East Germany, where unemployment totalled 140,000 at the end of June, initial predictions of the number of workers who will be made redundant have now been revised upwards from 2 million to 3 million (1 in 3 of the workforce). Forecasts of the likely impact of economic reform in the Soviet Union range from 35 million to 50 million unemployed.

Already some sections of the Eastern European working class have shown a willingness to struggle against these effects of economic reform. In Subversion no.3 we wrote about the East German workers' strikes in July against lay-offs and for higher wages. Since then, price rises and the threat of redundancies have provoked further strikes and demonstrations in East Germany.

Class struggle of this sort throws yet another spanner in the works of the ruling class's plans for reform. A working class on strike for higher wages, shorter working hours and assurances of no job losses does not present an attractive prospect for foreign capitalists, whose expectations of profits were based on keeping wages low and shedding 'unproductive' labour.

THE FUTURE

Time is running out for the rulers in Eastern Europe. So far, there is nothing to show for all the talk about perestroika. Meanwhile, the economic crisis had gone from bad to worse. The more critical the economic situation becomes, the more likely it is that the ruling class will be panicked into taking drastic and ill-considered measures

continued on page 10

DEMO: Muscovites' banner reads: "Down with the government."

continued from page 9

such as the Shatalin fantasy of moving to a free market economy within a mere 18 months.

At the same time, however, the ruling class is inhibited at every step by fear of the backlash such sweeping changes will provoke among the working class. Memories of last year's strikes by Ukrainian and Siberian miners are still fresh in the minds of the Soviet Union's rulers. Hence the deep divisions within the ruling class, between the radicals grouped around Shatalin and Boris Yeltsin, and the more cautious bureaucrats behind Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov, with Gorbachev dithering inbetween.

Massive class confrontations lie ahead in Eastern Europe. Although many pitfalls lie in the path of the class struggle there - such as nationalism, democracy and sectionalism - it's highly unlikely that ruling class commentators in the West will be able to depict 1991 in quite the glowing terms they used to describe 1989.

poll tax - class justice

continued from page 12

right to enter your house. You have to give them permission! But they are quite prepared to lie to get in.

One Oldham woman got home from work to find a bailiff at her door. He said that if she didn't let him in, then he'd get the police to force his way in. This was a lie. She believed him. In he came and made an inventory of all her valuable possessions. The only trouble was that it was her son who owed the money - not her. Again he'd acted illegally.

LABOUR COUNCILS FOR THE POLL TAX

Councils, like Labour Oldham, are using bailiffs to intimidate people. They hope that a few visits will get the word round - pay up or else. At this stage it is on the streets and in the communities that the real battle will be fought. In Scotland, bailiffs have been driven off estates. They've been frightened off. The question we've got to ask ourselves in England is - who controls our streets, our homes, our lives? It it the Councils with their bully boy tactics, or are we going to do so ourselves.

We need to organise ourselves, for ourselves against the state and its thugs.

subversion!

po box 145
oldham
ol4 4ww

* I WOULD LIKE:
* INFORMATION
* INFORMATION ABOUT MEETINGS
* EXTRA COPIES (please specify)
*
* Name:
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WHAT WE STAND FOR

'Subversion' is a small group of revolutionaries based in the north of England. We meet regularly for political discussion and to organise our activities, which include public meetings and the publication of this bulletin and other leaflets. The following is a brief summary of our basic political principles:

- We are against all forms of capitalism; private, state and self-managed.

- We are for communism, which is a classless society in which all goods are distributed according to needs and desires.

- We are actively opposed to all ideologies which divide the working class, such as religion, sexism and racism.

- We are against all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" movements such as the IRA.

- The working class (wage labourers, the unemployed, housewives, etc), is the revolutionary class; only its struggle can liberate humanity from scarcity, war and economic crisis.

- Trade unions are part of the capitalist system, selling our labour power to the bosses, and sabotaging our struggles. We support independent working class struggle, in all areas of life under capitalism, outside the control of the trade unions and all political parties.

- We totally oppose all capitalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. We are against participation in fronts with these organisations.

- We are against participation in parliamentary elections; we are for the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class and the establishment of organisations of working class power.

- We are against sectarianism, and support principled co-operation among revolutionaries.

- We exist to actively participate in escalating the class war towards communism.

The 'Subversion' group is currently participating in monthly discussion meetings organised under the auspices of the "Manchester Solidarity Group", along with members of Class War, the Anarchist-Communist Federation, the Anarchist Workers Group, and the Manchester Anarchists. The topic at the next meeting, in November, will be the North Sea oil workers' disputes and the role of the Trade Unions. If you are interested in coming to these meetings, or want more information about 'Subversion', please write to us at our group address:

P.O. BOX 145
OLDHAM
OL4 4WW

PUBLICATIONS

CLASS WAR ON THE HOME FRONT
A pamphlet originally published by the now defunct Wildcat group. It details revolutionary working class opposition to the second world war. It takes the form of reprints from Solidarity, the journal of the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation, one of the few groups in Britain to consistently advocate and report class struggle against the war effort.
Price £1.50 (inc p&p)

BEATING THE POLL TAX
Published by the Anarchist-Communist Federation.
Price 70p (inc p&p)

NOTES ON THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE USSR
Published by Subversion. Details working class struggle against Soviet State Capitalism.
Price 70p (inc p&p)

THE STATE AND CAPITAL IN JAPAN
Published by Subversion. Explains why Japanese capitalism isn't the triumph of free competition Thatcher claims it to be.
Price £1.20 (inc p&p)

subversion!

po box 145
oldham
ol4 4ww

poll tax - class justice

The Phoney War is over. Throughout England and Wales councils are switching into top gear. Every week thousands of working class people are being taken to court to make them pay their Poll Tax.

Despite their claims, the Anti-Poll Tax Unions have notably failed to stop the courts from dealing with these cases. Why is this? It is because the courts are dealing with a class law and a class justice. It is the law and justice of our rulers. Class justice is being seen to be done.

CAN'T PAY? HARD LUCK.

The law is very clear. There is no defence against a summons to pay the Poll Tax. It doesn't matter if you can't afford it. It doesn't matter if you or your children will have to go without. It says that if you are over eighteen you have to pay.

NEW RULES FOR OLD

The Poll Tax Unions had hoped to clog up the courts. This hasn't happened. Whenever we have looked like coming anywhere near success, then they've changed the rules. Non-payers have been tried in groups, instead of individually. Defendants have been refused the right to have a MacKenzie's Friend (a helper in court). In Oldham they've held courts in reserve and then moved defendants if things looked like taking a long time. Magistrates routinely issue Liability Orders against people who've received incorrect summonses.

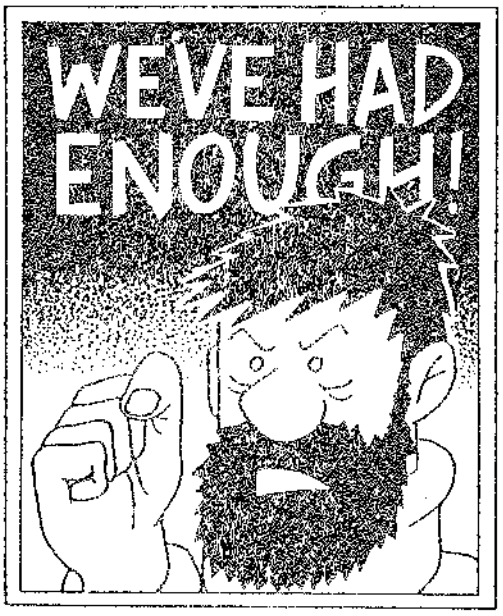
<u>None of this should be surprising</u>.

TIGHTEN YOUR BELTS

For years the ruling class has been telling us to tighten our belts. For years they've been trying to cut the services we get from local government. For years they've been trying to make us pay for their economic crisis. The Poll Tax does just this.

The Poll Tax means councils will have to close down services, run them on an even tighter shoestring or privatise them. For most of us it means a wage cut of hundreds of pounds a year. Instead of the bosses paying for services out of their profits we have to do so out of our wages.

For an economy as shaky as that of British capitalism a move like the Poll Tax is vital. Working people today pay more of their income in taxation than they did eleven years ago -- and were doing so before the Poll Tax came in. They want to stop us 'spending too much'. The Poll Tax is one way of doing this.



GOING TO COURT

It is important to go to court. Putting on a good show gives others encouragement. Going to court can be very intimidating, so attending can be a basic act of solidarity. The real battle is going to come afterwards.

BAILIFFS INTIMIDATE NON-PAYERS

Already English councils are sending in bailiffs. In England, bailiffs have no

continued on page 10

SUBVERSION! 7 free

Class solidarity against unemployment and wage cuts

Ambulance pay 'cut' by NHS trust

Cut staff, colleges urged

David Brindle, Social

Greyhound, Daily News Strikes

Workers Persevere Despite Uncertain Fu

Marathon strikes against Greyhound Lines, Inc. and

Major signals thousands of Whitehall jobs to go

1,000 face sack at Rolls-Royce

Workers block road

Hundreds of workers from an canne engineering firm blocked the with th trans-Yugoslavia motorway-mont yesterday in a protest about un-. *writ* paid wages. — Reuter.

Strike threatens all air travel from Soviet

Thousands caught in Spanis transport workers' pay strik

Barclays axes 470 jobs

not met before then. Ot strikes affected the Barcel underground

Print workers

Industrial action returns to Wapping

Royal Ordnance lays off 460

Rupert Murdoch's W

Polish miners go on strike

Strikes disrupt city services

Saab to close plant and shed 900 jobs

LIBRARY staff ha against low

Dire financial state forces firms to retrench across board

State bails out Australian bank in billion dollar plan

Clyde shipy sacks 1,600

ARTICLE ON INSIDE FRONT PAGE

BOSSES ATTACK SHARPENS

No longer, in Britain, is it a case of a wage cut OR redundancies, a wage rise BUT with worse conditions. Today we are faced with a massive onslaught on our class, involving wage cuts, worsening conditions AND compulsory redundancies. Neither is this onslaught restricted to one economic sector or area of the country. It covers everything from Local Authorities, Health Services and Public Transport, through the engineering sector(Govan shipbuilders, GEC, Fords, IBM, ICI, etc) to the services sector (Barclays Bank, Woolworths, Marks and Spencer, etc) and from north to south.

WORLD WIDE RECESSION

Labour politicians would have us believe this is all the fault of the wicked Tories. But although Britain's economy maymay be more fragile than some others, this cannot hide the fact that the whole world economy is in a state of disintegration.

The economies of the so-called Third World and Eastern Europe are in a state of near collapse. The motor industry, whose health generally reflects the state of modern industry, is suffering a major crisis right across the globe, involving plant closures and redundancies on a huge scale. Hi-tech computer industries have now also been caught up in the downward spiral of recession. Germany, the power-house of central European capitalism, is heavily burdened with the costs of reunification and even Japan is showing the first signs of economic decline, despite its competitive lead. The GATT talks on trade continue to flounder as each nation desperately tries to stop itself sinking at the expense of others. The whole world, not excepting the USA, is burdened with historic levels of public and private debt.

Our bosses and politicians from left to right are orchestrating a fierce attack designed to make us pay for their crisis ridden economy.

WORKERS FIGHT BACK

Our class has not sat idly by and accepted all this shit!

There has been a wave of strikes involving miners, textile and transport workers and many others right across the USSR and Eastern Europe and more recently in that last Stalinist stronghold of Albania. East German workers have long since forgotten the false euphoria over re-unification and are fighting back against redundancies and the withdrawal of social services.

There have been militant strikes of bus, railway and newspaper workers in the USA. Major strikes and demonstrations have taken place in Brazil and other South American states racked by hyper-inflation, IMF imposed austerity measures and government corruption.

There have been a number of lengthy strikes amongst textile and other workers in India that have been sustained by a high level of 'community' support.

In the midst of war in the Gulf, militant Turkish miners and their supporters threatened the stability of the Turkish government.

Examples abound of the world wide nature of working class resistance to the bosses attacks.

Here in Britain the beginnings of a fight back have been evident amongst Liverpool Council workers, Massey Ferguson, Post Office, Tube and other workers.

POTENTIALITIES AND PROBLEMS

There exists the potential for a widespread, militant and unified response from our class that could at least temporarily push back the effects of the crisis and lay the basis for an offensive against the whole rotten economic system.

Unfortunately there are still many

obstacles in the way of our class taking the first essential steps towards such a unified response.

Two such major obstacles are NATIONALISM and the UNIONS.

NATIONALISM

In the USSR and Eastern Europe, where the old rigid Stalinist regimes have recently crumbled, local ruling class factions are flexing their muscles in a desperate bid to avoid being dragged under with the rest of their former compatriots.

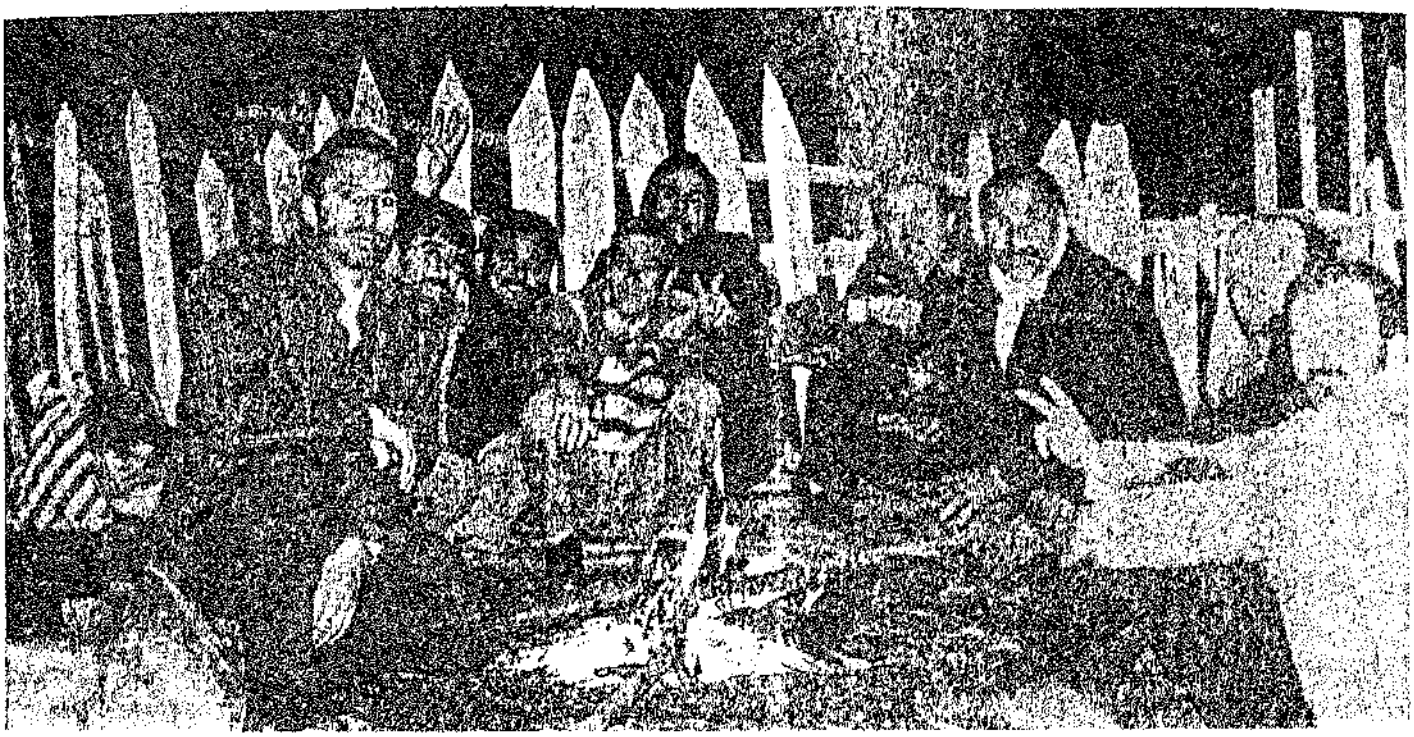
They are using the resentment of workers at decades of central bureaucratic control and suppression of local languages and culture to bolster their own positions of power in a wave of petty nationalism. The struggle of workers is being diverted from their common class interests towards futile programmes of decentralisation and new nationhood dressed up in the language of "freedom" and "democracy".

On the Indian sub-continent a whole plethora of nationalisms, ethnic and religios divisions is fostered in a similar attempt by local ruling class factions to rest some degree of power and influence from an economic situation out of the control of the bloated bureaucracies of central governments.

In the 'middle' east and elsewhere, both major and minor imperialist powers cynically use national and religious rivalries to their own ends in total disregard to the suffering of that lands shifting refugee crisis. The sheer immensity of suffering amongst the people of this area has so far almost totally smothered earlier glimmerings of independent working class action.

In western Europe, nationalism doesn't have quite the same force, but it is still at work, particularly through expressions of racism against North Africans in France, Turkish workers in Germany and Asians in Britain.

Here in Britain, politicians of all varieties try to present the economic ills we are suffering as a peculiarly British phenomenon. They invite us to take part in THEIR democratic debates as to the best solutions - in or out of the EEC, Tory or Labour managers for UK plc, etc. In Scotland and Wales the nationalists and their partners in the Green Party add colour to this dull discussion by promoting their own petty nationalist concerns. As if an 'independent' Wales or Scotland would be any less affected by the world slump or



On their march to Ankara, the miners and their families spent two nights on the road before being turned back

being sacked by a Welsh or Scottish boss was more agreeable.

UNIONS AGAINST THE WORKING CLASS

If nationalism is not enough on its own to derail our struggle, the Bosses rely on the Unions to assist them.

Whatever the benefits of the Unions in the last century, it is clear that today they are totally integrated into the structure of capitalism.

Not only are the Unions major capitalist investors in their own right, but their structure reflects the heirachical organisation of the capitalist state and big business as well. They are junior partners in the management of the economy with special responsibility for controlling the work force. This job is all the more effectively carried out precisely because they maintain a FORMAL independence from the corridors of power. This is a lesson well learnt by the failure of the old Stalinist Unions in the USSR and Eastern Europe. That they can do a better job for the bosses by being 'independent' is well illustrated by the history of **SOLIDARITY** in Poland. It was **SOLIDARITY**, not the old unions which brought the escalating struggle of the workers there under control and which helped enforce subsequent austerity measures.

UNION TACTICS

In Britain, the Unions are even more experienced at heading off trouble on 'the shop floor'.

These are just some of their tactics against us:

- Holding separate ballots amongst different Unions in the same work-place.
- Holding open ended ballots which don't commit them to any particular line of action.
- Continually re-balloting every time the bosses make a slight alteration to their offer.
- Keeping strikes and strikers isolated from each other by monopolising the means of communication.
- Bringing different groups of workers out on strike at different times when their interests are the same and they would have more impact by striking together (viz Tube, Bus and Railway workers in recent disputes).
- Doing behind the scenes deals with the bosses.
- Calling for militant action prematurely, then referring back to failed actions when workers are really keen to go on the offensive.
- Calling campaigns on side issues (like the engineers 35 hour campaign) when workers need to fight for jobs and wages.
- Splitting workers between 'profitable' and 'non-profitable' firms (like the arguments of the power and BT Unions at present).
- Arguing that we "shouldn't rock the boat" in the run up to a parliamentary election and lying that the Labour Party will solve our problems.

- Threatening withdrawal of strike pay (OUR money) if we don't agree to their deals with the bosses.
- Arguing for "lawful action" when the law is DELIBERATELY designed to defeat us.

The list is endless and no doubt you could add a few more from your own experience.

ANOTHER WAY

Of course the Unions don't always get their way. Recently, Massey Ferguson workers in Coventry responded to the announcement of 60 day lay offs by

holding a mass meeting and going on IMMEDIATE all out strike - without waiting for ballots.

There is a long and honourable history of wildcat strikes amongst workers, but only rarley have these completely broken from the trade unionist framework on any scale.

It is vital now that workers everywhere begin to take matters into their own hands.

This means opposing the diversionary tactics of the Unions by uniting our struggles across Union and other sectional boundaries.

Strikes need to be organised through mass assemblies open to ALL those involved and with directly elected strike committees. Strikes over basic issues like redundancies and wage cuts need to be spread as widely as possible by sending large delegations directly to other workers facing the same threats. Efforts must be made to involve the unemployed and other unwaged workers.

To deal with the unions monopoly on communications, networks of militant workers in different areas and industries need to be built up to spread information and agitate for joint action. Groups of militant workers need to meet also to discuss the POLITICAL implications of the struggles going on.

Increasingly solidarity action across national boundaries will become both necessary and possible.

The experience of all this kind of organised action will help develop a new independent community of resistance. We can begin to develop the confidence and practical understanding necessary to challenge the whole economy of wage labour and production for profit.

NEWS OF INTERNATIONAL CLASS STRUGGLE

'ECHANGES' is a well established, cheaply produced, bulletin which regularly reviews and summarises the contents of many interesting radical and revolutionary publications from across the world.

It also translates and reprints longer articles reporting on and analysing the international class struggle.
Although rarely bang up to date, it provides some valuable backgroung information for understanding the nitty gritty of class struggle in many different countries.

You can also obtain from them other publications, such as Anton Pannekoek's book 'Workers Councils'.

Their bulletin is available on subscription, in either English or French.

Write for details to:-

Echanges Et Mouvement
BM BOX 91, London WC1 3XX

PUBLIC MEETINGS... PUBLIC MEETINGS

SUBVERSION is currently holding a series of public meetings in co-operation with 'Class War' and the 'Anarchist Communist Federation'.

The meetings are intended to provide an introduction to the politics of revolutionary communism which all three groups share and to provide a forum for exploring some of the important differences between us, in a non-sectarian way.

Anyone interested in comming to future meetings in the central Manchester area should write for further details to:

SUBVERSION c/o Dept 10
1 Newton Street, Piccadilly,
Manchester M1 1HW.

CHARITY MAKES US SICK

I've got two small kids. Their favourite TV programme is Blue Peter. Since last November, they've been bombarded with images of deprived orphans in Rumania and starving and dying Kurds. So we had to help raise money for these causes - the children would never have forgiven us if we hadn't. Throughout the country, children raised over 6m pounds for the Rumanian orphans and countless thousands for the Kurds. Since then I've been involved at school (I'm a teacher) in fundraising for Rumania and now for Bangladesh. I've also personally raised money for the CF Trust and helped at a fundraising do for the NCT.

So why do we say, "CHARITY MAKES US SICK"?

THE WORLD TODAY

It's estimated that almost 30 million people in Africa are in danger of starving to death. Maybe 200,000 people died in the recent cyclone in Bangladesh. God knows how many thousands died in the mountains of Kurdistan.

Yet there is nothing natural about any of these so-called "natural disasters".

Starving people in Africa need about 3 million metric tonnes of food this year. This sounds like a lot. However, in 1988 the world grain surplus was 360 million tonnes! That's 120 times as much as is needed to feed these people. At the same time the EEC is drawing up new schemes to take land out of cultivation - because too much is being produced! BANGLADESH

In Bangladesh a cyclone has killed well over 100,000 people and many others face the risk of disease and famine. Yet a similar occurence in the USA led to a few tens of deaths. Why is this the case?

A lot of the problems in Bangladesh were due to poverty. People lived in ramshackle huts, in overcrowded conditions and low-lying islands. The cyclone simply washed them away. In the USA most people live in stronger houses in better locations. In Bangladesh the government hasn't built a single cyclone shelter in the last ten years. All the ones that did exist, and

incidentally saved thousands of lives, were built by organisations like the Red Cross.

It would only have cost $200 million to build the 5000 shelters that could have held 10 million people. This is far less than was spent on day one of the Gulf War. Part of this is, of course, due to inefficiency and corruption - problems bred by the very poverty that existed there in the first place. CAN'T PAY - WON'T EAT

Clearly, the problem of food isn't that people can't grow enough food to live. We have already seen that there is more than enough food in the world. The problem comes down to the fact that the world doesn't operate on the basis of supplying peoples' needs. It operates

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on the basis of producing things for sale on a market and expects them to make a profit. If you can't buy something, then you simply can't have it.

EX-COLONIES

The problem isn't either that third world people are incapable of producing the food they need themselves. At the root of the problem is the way world production works. Most third world countries are ex-colonies. Their economies were always intended, by their capitalist owners to exist to serve the imperialist homeland. So, for example, the Bengali cotton manufacturing industry was destroyed to make way for a cotton growing economy that would export cotton to Britain for production into cloth. Other countries were to produce other primary products for refining in the capitalist heartlands, like Britain, France and the USA. Today, they still mostly produce primary products.

WANNA BORROW A DOLLAR?

This is made worse by the way that money is loaned to third world countries. Most of this comes with strings attatched. Governments stipulate what loans can be spent on. When Third World states cannot get loans from commercial institutions or other states,they turn to either the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund. The World Bank and IMF lay down terms that prevent governments spending on social programmes - and insist on prompt repayments.

Most loans that come from other states come with strings. The country receiving the loan is told that it must spend it on imports from the donor country. It is even told what these imports must be. So the country borrowing is forced to use the loan to further develop low profit primary production that can then be exported to the donor country. The cycle of underdevelopment and dependence continues. On top of this the debtor state has to pay interest.

In 1989 the poorest countries in the world paid out 63 billion pounds more in interest on debts to Western banks and governments than they got in aid.

It was this kind of thing that led to the grissly situation of Ethiopia exporting meat and grain while millions starved in 1985.

UNICEFs published a report in 1987, "Adjustment with a human face". It said that "adjustment packages" imposed by world bankers meant that "expenditure per head at constant prices decreased in nearly half the African continent for which data exists and in 60% of the countries in Latin America. Education expenditure per head declined in a third of African countries and 59%of Latin American countries". The report went on,"Many children will die, and many of the survivors will suffer permanent damage, because of the failure to act now."

Another example is Morocco. In "A Fate Worse Than Debt", Susan George says,"Morocccco, once a North African granary and major supplier for France, is today reduced to importing over 3 million tons of wheat annually - while its unwanted oranges and tomatoes rot in the fields or in the docks". It was the IMF who "planned" the switch in Morocco's economy to the export of products nobody suddenly wanted.

CANCEL THE DEBT?

Unfortunately, there is no chance of the banks simply cancelling the debt wholesale. The whole of the banking system relies on the paying of interest on these debts. These repayments keep the crisis-ridden economies of the rest afloat. Cancelling the debts would mean the collapse of the banking system and maybe the western economy. This would hardly benefit the Third World!

Forced to produce primary products, third world countries have been faced with the reality of falling commodity prices, and hence the problem of having to produce more to repay the same. As the rulers of these states are unwilling to give up their living standards, the only answer that capitalism has is to force down the living standards of the poor. The rich have nothing to fear, however, because the imperialist states also have major industries only too willing and able to supply the means of repression to keep

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the working class and peasantry in their place.

THE AID GAME

When things get really desperate the rich countries provide aid. But even aid is not always a gift. Most cash 'aid' provided to third world states is "tied". That means that it has to be spent on programmes specified by the donor country - on products made by that country. On top of that 80% of food 'aid' is not a gift, but rather is paid for by exchanging raw materials. Often food aid is simply a way the donor uses to get rid of unwanted surplus production, rather than food which is actually useful to the starving masses.

Faced with this situation, our rulers have the cheek to turn round and tell us that the answer is charity!

Talking about the need for charity shifts the burden of blame for the appalling state of the world. Instead of millions starving because of the greed of capitalists and the inadequacies of the profit system, we get the idea that it is the inadequacies of the victims that is to blame and the fault of all of "us" in the rich north. This, we are told, can only be overcome by a reduction in our standard of living. This kind of line is very popular with the Greens and the Ecologists. Of course, this means a reduction for working people, not the bosses. And we must all give to charity to assuage our guilt for living such indecently "affluent" lives. It is a way of selling austerity to us all.

Our response to that is that we don't want our standard of living to suffer, we want that of the masses in less well-off parts to improve. Unlike those who control the media, we don't see the masses in the Third World solely as passive victims. Recent events in Ethiopia show that. Workers in India are regularly involved in massive confrontations with their employers and states. Workers in the townships of South Africa were a beacon of class struggle in the 1980s. Even a casual glance though the foreign pages of the press will throw up countless other examples. We need these workers to link up with those in the capitalist heartlands to get rid of the profit system that caused the problems in the first place.

CHARITY STARTS AT HOME?

Charity also takes the form of an additional tax on our incomes. The state no longer pretends to fund decent health care for working class people. It no longer pretends to provide a decent education - or even books - for

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our kids. Instead it is down to our own ability to raise funds. What they give us with one hand in the form of tax cuts, they expect us to take away for them. Hence all the efforts for hospitals like Booth Hall, the Mandy Turner Scanner Appeal and countless more. Hence our kids raising 6 million for Rumania - less than one third of the cost of a single plane shot down in the Gulf War.

So, yes, charity is shit. It's shit we have to put up with, because without it life would be so much worse. In many ways it is the working class's humane response to tragedy and need perverted by the profit system. We know it's not the answer to the many problems we face from day to day. The only answer to that is to get rid of the system that created the problems in the first place. We need a revolution to get rid of the bosses and their profit motive, and replace it with a human community that takes from each what they can give and in return gives each person what they need for a decent, fulfilling life.

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The issue of boycotts will be discussed in an article in a subsequent issue of SUBVERSION.

CON-PACT

COMPACTS

The so-called Compact scheme first started in Boston in the USA and when it failed there, it was introduced into schools in East London. According to the glossy handouts, the student enters into a compact with a listed number of firms. The students have to meet certain personal goals: not less than 85% attendance in the fourth and fifth year, 90% punctuality, satisfactory completion of courses including a graded result in English and maths, two weeks work experience and satisfactory attendance on a Personal and Social Education course. In return the employers, supposedly, offer jobs with good training and prospects, including work experience. It is now being introduced in many towns and cities across the country, although there is no guaranteed job at the end of it, only an interview if you're lucky! Employers have actually said that they want to introduce their own 'test' which would exclude a large number of pupils from even the interview stage. The employers involved in the scheme provide very little and in return get the choice of the best qualified school leavers.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS
BETWEEN
EMPLOYERS AND EDUCATION

Teachers are having to work harder and longer hours doing pointless and time-consuming administration for initiatives which do not even benefit the pupils. The Compact scheme is an initiative designed to benefit employers. There is no evidence to suggest that young people get anything out of it. It is part of the whole 'Education & Training' racket which has more to do with making tomorrow's unemployed youth more 'marketable' and 'employable' so as to compete with those already in jobs and thus reduce wage bills. It has nothing to do with education. It is a waste of time and should be avoided at all costs.

want to help?

If you agree broadly with our politics, there are a number of ways you can help SUBVERSION.

Take extra copies to distribute in your area.

Write to us. We would welcome short articles (not more than 400 words), or the kind of information we could use to put into articles of our own.

Send some money. Although we distribute SUBVERSION free it still costs quite a lot to produce - so all contributions are welcome.

Please make all cheques/postal orders payable to R.Knight.

SATS FAIL THE TEST

The Easter NUT conference vote to back teachers who refused to implement the National Curriculum and boycott the Standard Assessment Tasks (SATS) appeared to be a setback for the Government. Parents were prompted to demonstrate their opposition to tests for seven year olds, meetings were held, schools leafleted and petitions signed. Encouraged by the success of the Scottish campaign, where the tests had started a month earlier, and where over 50 per cent of parents had withdrawn their children from the tests, it looked as if a major challenge to the Tories' plans in education was underway.
Yet, as the result of the NUT ballot showed, only 12% voted for action in the end. What went wrong?

BOTTOM OF THE CLASS STRUGGLE

The first answer to this question must surely lie in what has happened in education during the last five years. Despite the changes that have been imposed upon schools since 1986, most of which have served to pose a major threat to teachers' conditions and jobs, there has not been a single days national strike action over any of them. Pay, in real terms, has deteriorated. And the threat by some councils to ignore national pay scales and introduce individual teacher performance-related pay only serves to underline the extent to which teachers have been divided and set against each other.
This contrasts with Scotland where there has been more resistance to attacks on conditions, and where pay is still significantly higher. Given that SATS is only directly affecting a small band of primary teachers at this moment in time (though they will impinge upon all schools by 1994), it was unlikely to be the issue which would reverse the defeats of the last five years and unite teachers.

SIT NO SATS

A more significant factor is how teachers themselves perceive SATS. Many will not have seen the link

with other apparently disparate initiatives like LMS, performance-related pay and appraisal where the results of SATS will be used to reinforce the idea of "good" and "bad" teachers and schools. Under LMS, the amount of money that schools will receive depends on the number of pupils within the school. All state schools will be teaching the National Curriculum. The results of the tests will be published. Open enrolment will put an end to practices designed to maintain school rolls and mixed ability entry. Some schools may thrive. Others will not -- schools will be competing with each other for limited pupil-linked resources. Like SATS, performance-related pay will be used with no consideration of other factors -- social, economic, domestic, linguistic, etc. -- which will be ignored.

SINK SCHOOLS

Even before the National Curriculum has got properly underway, some councils are considering ignoring national pay scales and introducing performance-related pay for teachers. The results of the tests will also increase the differentiation which has already started in the inner city areas where there is greatest shortage of teachers and resources. The private sector, where the ruling class send their kids, has not been affected by any of the recent legislation. As for the rest, there will be a few "good"

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schools which are relatively well resourced and a larger number of "sink" schools. The poorest, most deprived children will go to these schools and, inevitably, a large number will be black. The Government's real intentions were revealed by a senior official at the Education department, drawing up plans for the National Curriculum and testing, who said, "People must be educated once more to know their place".

UNION SABOTAGE

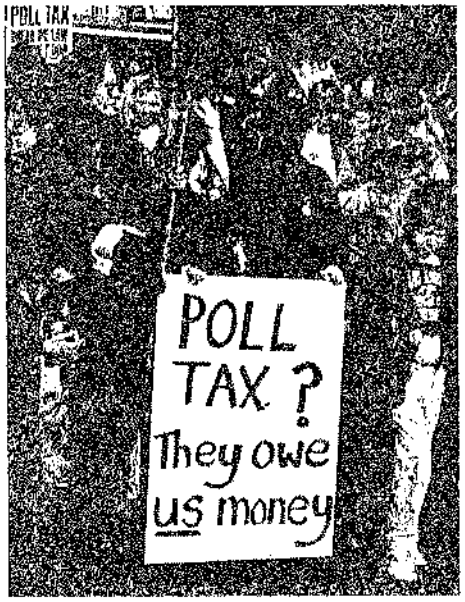
Why has the fight against testing not been led by the Unions? Those on the Left, like the Socialist Teachers Alliance, believe that it should have been and that it is only the sluggishness of the current NUT leadership which is getting in the way. Far from getting in the way, they have been doing all they can to sabotage any calls for a boycott of the tests (as did also the EIS leaders in Scotland).

The successful fight against redundancies, the ultimate end product of SATS, will depend upon teachers organising independently of the Unions. It means taking decisions about what action is necessary through directly elected committees of all those involved regardless of union membership. It means getting parents involved as has happened in Scotland. And ultimately it means challenging a system where 'education' is reduced to churning out factory fodder and failures.

ANTI-POLL TAX MOVEMENT: DEFENDING OURSELVES OR DEFENDING THE STATE.

The activities of the 'Militant' dominated Anti-Poll tax Federation have been exposed in the pages of 'Subversion' before. One organisation in the movement we have however supported, is the 'Trafalgar Square Defence Campaign'. They have been the main organisation providing practical support for arrested anti-poll tax protesters and prisoners, on a politically 'unconditional' basis. They continue to carry on this essential work and deserve all the support they can get in their efforts.

A 'Campaign' of this sort inevitably has to compromise with the state in the form of the courts, and with the media etc, even where participants are politically opposed to the state. Some dealings with the Federation have also been necessary in the interests of defendents. But if the TSDC is not to be drawn into a 'liberal' defence of the state, careful judgements need to be made. The need to stress 'peaceful' intentions and the aggressiveness of the police in the context of the individual defence of those arrested, must be set against the equally important task of promoting a positive and aggressive image of our class in its struggle for liberation. To often the 'Left' gets away with presenting our class simply as passive victims of the state.



A recent leaflet, criticising the overal approach of the TSDC towards demonstrations, their relationship to the Federation and recent tactics has been produced by comrades from London. We don't necessarily agree with everything they say but its worth a read. If you would like a copy send a stamped self-addressed envelope to us, or direct to:-

BM CAT, London WC1 3XX.

The TSDC can be contacted:-

C/O The Haldane Society of Lawers, 2o5 Panther House, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1X OAP.

LETTERS

Dear Subversion,
I'm writing with a few enquiries. Although I've read most of your propaganda I'm uncertain as to where you "stand" on organisation.

Do you see Subversion as a formal or informal organisation? An organisation or an affinity group? If you think Subversion's structure is the best model for politics, do you see it changing when more people are involved?

Although I realise this is one of the most important discussions and pages and books can be written on it, I'd be more than happy with just a few lines!
Yours in solidarity,
Keeley.

Dear Keeley,
Many thanks for your letter. You are right, the question of organisation is a difficult and important one. You are also right that we haven't addressed the issue yet in the pages of our bulletin.

Subversion is quite a small group and as such we haven't had to face up to the question of organisational structures. Quite simply, everything that needs to be decided is done so either at regular meetings or over the phone. This does not mean, however, that we see this as an ideal for others to follow. It simply reflects the position we are in at the moment.

You ask whether we are a formal organisation or not. Those involved in producing Subversion are "members", in the sense that we all agree with certain basic politics. Broadly speaking, these are as laid out in our regular Where We Stand statement. We also broadly hold to the views outlined in the old WILDCAT pamphlet CAPITALISM AND ITS REVOLUTIONARY DESTRUCTION (although if we were writing it today we would make a number of alterations). The politics expressed in unsigned articles in SUBVERSION also represent our collective views. In practice, all the articles to date are of this nature. We try to take decisions on the basis of concensus, but we are not beyond taking a vote to reach a difficult decision. If we take a majority decision, we expect everyone to abide by it. On top of all this, we also pay monthly dues. I guess you can say that that all makes us a formal organisation.

As we are based mostly in one geographical area, we don't have to worry about other problems of organisation. However, we would not say that the way we operate is a model for others to follow. It is simply expedient. If others wanted to become involved in our activities, we would welcome them as long as it was on the basis of political agreement and a commitment to work with us. Such an event would require a rethinking of the way we operate.

We want to see revolutionary groups grow in size and influence. We don't think this should be on the basis of independent local groups. For us, the revolutionary movement needs to come together into national and international organisations. We are not particularly bothered what label is attatched to the type of organisation. But we think it should be on the basis of common politics and willingness to work together. It also means being prepared to abide by democratically arrived at decisions. To this extent we see the way we operate today as being relevant to the future. As a first step towards this we try to work with other revolutionaries and their groups. For example we hold joint meetings with Manchester Class War and the ACF in Manchester. To meet others of like mind we participate in discussions at Class Struggle Anarchist Network meetings, and hope to engage in joint activity with people we find ourselves in some agreement with there.

In the long run we believe that the only way forward is some kind of regroupment that we could be part of. We believe that our politics are broadly correct, but also recognise that we can learn from others. I think that reading our publications since we started will show that we have changed quite a bit.

SUBVERSION

NOTE: readers can obtain a photocopy of the pamphlet CAPITALISM AND ITS REVOLUTIONARY DESTRUCTION by writing to us and sending 50p to cover costs and postage.

SUBVERSION!

We meet regularly for political discussion and to organise our activities, which include public meetings and the publication of this bulletin and other leaflets. The following is a brief summary of our basic political principles:

- We are against all forms of capitalism; private, state and self-managed.

- We are for communism, which is a classless society in which all goods are distributed according to needs and desires.

- We are actively opposed to all ideologies which divide the working class, such as religion, sexism and racism.

- We are against all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" movements such as the IRA.

- The working class (wage labourers, the unemployed, housewives, etc), is the revolutionary class; only its struggle can liberate humanity from scarcity, war and economic crisis.

- Trade unions are part of the capitalist system, selling our labour power to the bosses and sabotaging our struggles. We support independent working class struggle, in all areas of life under capitalism, outside the control of the trade unions and all political parties.

- We totally oppose all capitalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. We are against participation in fronts with these organisations.

- We are against participation in parliamentary elections; we are for the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class and the establishment of organisations of working class power.

- We are against sectarianism, and support principled co-operation among revolutionaries

- We exist to actively participate in escalating the class war towards communism.

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it. Yet every time it happens the people who claim to represent our interests, the Leftists, find a reason why we should support it.

VILE HYPOCRITES

The SWP and other Trot groups are now urging support for Kurdish nationalism against the Iraqi regime, as the solution to the suffering now evident in Kurdistan. The same groups who only yesterday were SUPPORTING the Iraqi regime in its own national war against the West. It is harder to imagine greater hypocrisy.

Most of the so-called opposition to the war consisted of groups like the above who only opposed the Western side and supported Iraq, or of groups like CND who supported the West - but merely wished it to starve people in Iraq into submission rather than using bombs, i.e. they pushed the idea of sanctions.

We can confidently predict that it will be the same in the NEXT war.

YOUR CLASS NEEDS YOU

To all working class people who have fallen for any variety of these illusions about capitalist war we simply say - look at the results of wars past and present, that nothing but misery has ever been achieved for the workers, and let the next war be different. It is only when workers realise that their interest is in supporting their CLASS - against all the false claims on our allegiance from whatever faction of the capitalist class in whatever country - that the overthrow of this system of exploitation, war and suffering becomes a practical possibility. The class war to overthrow capitalism is the ONLY war workers can support - a war which instead of being the instrument of death will be the instrument of LIFE. A war to create a world without oppression, exploitation, suffering or want. A world were life is truly worth living.

SUBVERSION!

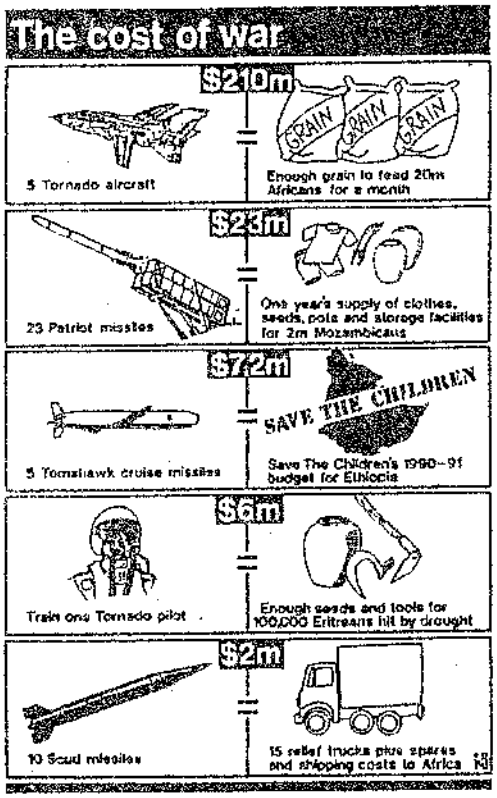
GULF FALLOUT

Thus ends the glorious crusade of the Western Democratic / Anti-Imperialist forces against Mad-dog Saddam / Bush the imperialist (delete as appropriate).

The situation that now exists in the region has shone the cold, clear light of day on the illusions that many had that either: a) the victory of the Western forces would remove a brutal dictator and improve conditions for people suffering under his dictatorship; or b) a glorious "anti-imperialist" war (albeit led by a dictator) would pit "revolutionary" forces against Imperialism.

The reality is there for all to see: Saddam still in power (Bush having actually SUPPORTED his regime against the uprising in the south and in Kurdistan, his preferred option always having been a Ba'athist regime without Saddam)and the position of the major imperialist powers unimpaired. All that has resulted is death and destruction on a grand scale and increased misery for the survivors. This is always the way with Imperialist wars (and ALL capitalist powers - ALL countries large and small, ALL capitalist political movements - are Imperialist because they are integral parts of the world capitalist system, a system which is today an integrated whole and which is supported and maintained by ALL its constituent parts, for all their jockeying for position WITHIN the Imperialist pecking order).

Every time such a war happens it is a yet more insistent argument that working class people, the people who always suffer in wars for the sake of the interests of our oppressors, the capitalists, should oppose war and the system that gives rise to


The cost of war
$210m
5 Tornado aircraft
GRAIN
GRAIN
GRAIN
Enough grain to feed 20m Africans for a month
$23m
23 Patriot missiles
One year's supply of clothes, seeds, pots and storage facilities for 2m Mozambicans
$72m
5 Tomahawk cruise missiles
SAVE THE CHILDREN
Save The Children's 1990-91 budget for Ethiopia
$6m
Train one Tornado pilot
Enough seeds and tools for 100,000 Eritreans hit by drought
$2m
10 Scud missiles
15 relief trucks plus spares and shipping costs to Africa

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Subversion

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

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ALF STRIKES AT CHEESE SHOPS

DIABETES - PROFITS BEFORE HEALTH

MILITANT - THE PARTY's OVER

A NEW WORLD ORDER?

MARXISM AND ANARCHISM

free

WHAT WE STAND FOR

Members of SUBVERSION all agree with the following principles. We believe that they provide a minimum basis for revolutionary organisation.

* We are against all forms of capitalism; private, state and self-managed.

* We are for communism, which is a classless society in which all goods are distributed according to needs and desires.

* We are actively opposed to all ideologies which divide the working class, such as religion, sexism and racism.

* We are against all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" movements such as the IRA.

* The working class (wage labourers, the unemployed, housewives, etc), is the revolutionary class; only its struggle can liberate humanity from scarcity, war and economic crisis.

* Trade Unions are part of the capitalist system, selling our labour power to the bosses and sabotaging our struggles. We support independent working class struggle, in all areas of life under capitalism, outside the control of the trade unions and all political parties.

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* We are against participation in parliamentary elections; we are for the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class and the establishment of organisations of working class power.

* We are against sectarianism and support principled co-operation among revolutionaries.

* We exist to actively participate in escalating the class war towards communism.

subversion 8

SUBVERSION is a group of revolutionaries based in the north of England.

We all agree with the statement "WHAT WE STAND FOR", which is printed on this page.

We work together to produce this bulletin and hold regular discussion meetings in the Manchester area. We usually hold these meetings jointly with members of the ACF and Manchester CLASS WAR.

If you like the politics of SUBVERSION why not write to us or come along to one of our meetings.

want to help?

If you want to help us there are a number of things you can do.

WRITE TO US

We welcome articles for inclusion in SUBVERSION. This issue contains an article written by revolutionaries in Hastings.

SEND A LETTER

We always welcome letters and will try to answer any questions you raise. The article MARXISM AND ANARCHISM was written for this reason.

TAKE EXTRA COPIES

We want SUBVERSION to be as widely read as possible and will happily send you a bundle.

SEND US YOUR MONEY!

Although SUBVERSION is free, we rely heavily on donations to let us carry on producing it.

Please make cheques, postal orders, etc. payable to SUBVERSION.
Write to: SUBVERSION, DEPT 10, 1 NEWTON ST, MANCHESTER M1 1HW

THE COUP IN THE SOVIET UNION

Some newspapers dubbed it "60 Hours That Shook The World" - calling to mind the radical American journalist John Reed's famous account of the October Revolution, Ten Days That Shook The World. Others described it as "The (Second) Russian Revolution", and announced "The End Of Communism".

These and numerous similar comparisons between the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the events surrounding the failed coup of -21 August 1991 may have made for exciting headlines, but they wildly exaggerated the real significance of the events they were meant to describe.

The August events did not mark the end or beginning of an epoch, nor have they changed the course of history. What they have done, however, is to accelerate the progress of the Soviet Union further along a path clearly marked out well before Gennady Yanayev and his strangely inept band of fellow-conspirators stepped onto the stage.

STATE CAPITALISM

Let's begin by contradicting what just about everyone else seems to be saying about the events in the Soviet Union: for us, the unlamented demise of the Communist rty of the Soviet Union does not signal 'The End of Communism'. The Soviet Union never was a "communist state". What has existed in the Soviet Union has been a form of capitalism: state capitalism.

The Communist Party of Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin & Co. (the Bolsheviks) represented the extreme left-wing of pre-First World War Social-Democracy, whose strategy for achieving "socialism" boiled down to a political party taking over the government on behalf of the working class and then nationalising everything.

This concept had next to nothing to do with the revolutionary idea of working-class self-emancipation. But it coincided perfectly with the objective needs of post-Tsarist Russia, which lacked the vigorous indigenous capitalist class which could haul the country into the front ranks of competing world powers.

Following the 1917 revolution, the leaders of the Bolshevik Party rapidly consolidated themselves as the effective owners of all important means of wealth-production - whatever fictions it peddled about all property belonging to 'the people'. Through a massive enlargement of the wage-earning working class and widespread use of virtual slave labour, it compressed into a mere 3 or 4 decades the process of capital accumulation which had been going on for a century or longer in countries such as Britain and America.

Tanks in Moscow, 19th August 1991

While the Russian working class - whose labour alone created this massive economic growth - sweated blood, the 'Red Tsars' who ruled over them reaped the benefits in terms of a lifestyle every bit as privileged as their fellow-capitalists elsewhere in the world.

This was what was passed off as "the first workers' state", the "socialist paradise". In fact it bore as much resemblance to communism as chalk does to cheese.

PERESTROIKA

The state capitalist system which developed in the Soviet Union is often referred to as a "Planned Economy". Perestroika is said to be about replacing this with the "Free Market". In fact, this supposed opposition between The Market and The Plan is a misleading myth.

In both cases, a propertiless working class sells its labour power to an employer in return for a wage or salary, production is carried on with the aim of maximising profits, enterprises supply each other on a buying and selling basis, and so on.

According to the model of a "Free Market" economy (such a system doesn't actually exist anywhere in reality), the sum total of economic activity is supposed to be the outcome of millions of free and equal individuals each independently pursuing their own rational self-interest.

In the "Planned Economy", on the other hand, the relationships between employers and employees, between different enterprises, and between the various sectors of the economy, are all laid down in advance and regulated by a central bureaucracy, which aims to maximise profits at the level of the economy as a whole.

In other words, state capitalism is still a market system, but it is a planned market, rather than a free market. However, as the ideologists of the "Free Market" system never cease to point out, it is hardly humanly possible to plan in advance every last one of the literally countless number of economic transactions involved in a complex large-scale economy. The state capitalist system has proved particularly cumbersome in responding to the crises which have affected the world economic system for the past 20 years, and which demand wholesale restructuring of the economy and the re-direction of capital investment between different sectors of the economy.

The policies of perestroika and glasnost were the response of certain sections of the Soviet ruling class to the world economic crisis as it afflicted the social, economic and political life of the state capitalist countries. Individual enterprises would be released from some of the restrictions of The Plan, enabling them to respond more rapidly and flexibly to market forces. Some of the obstacles in the way of private ownership and foreign investment would also be removed, in order to identify, and encourage growth in, those sectors of the economy where capital might be invested more profitably.

At every level of the Soviet Empire, from the Eastern European bloc, to the Republics combined in the Union, on down to the individual enterprises, the old structures would be broken up and re-assembled on a different pattern.

This was not the abandonment of communism, but the capitalist profit system changing some of its external forms in order to prolong its own existence. Already the Eastern European bloc has been dismantled. The Soviet Republics have started to go their own way. What shape all the pieces will eventually fall into once this process has worked itself out more fully remains to be seen.

THE COUP

While some sections of the Soviet ruling class clearly expect to gain from the policies of glasnost and perestroika, others equally plainly do not. The junta headed by Vice-President Yanayev which announced itself on 19 August read like a roll-call of those sections of the Soviet ruling class which stand to lose most through the current reform processes.

Yazov, Pugo and Kryuchkov - the heads, respectively, of the armed forces, the police and the KGB - each represented Union-wide forces whose future hangs in the balance as the USSR begins to break up. The influence of the armed forces has been dealt a severe blow by the voluntary surrender of the Soviet Union's Eastern European Empire, and by the sight of the United States revelling in its virtually unchallenged role as policeman of the globe. Domestically, all of the various reform plans published over the past few years would have severely reduced federal spending on the armed forces and security services, diverting resources away from the 'military-industrial complex' towards the 'civilian' economy.

Among the other ringleaders, Prime Minister Pavlov, with a career background in the state economic planning ministries, Baklanov, head of the military economy, and Tizyakov, a leading figure among the top industrial managers, each represented sections of the ruling class whose power is threatened by proposals to drastically curtail central planning and to sell off state assets to private ownership. The final conspirator, Starodubstev, head of the farmers' union, knew only too well that the reformers plan to break up the agricultural collectives and reintroduce large-scale private ownership of land.

A few years ago this would have been a formidable line-up. But the curiously half-hearted nature of the attempted coup and the remarkable ease with which it was repelled show just how far the balance of forces within the Soviet ruling class has tilted. The junta's worst fears about the direction in which Soviet society is heading were first confirmed by the means by which the coup was defeated, and then surpassed in its aftermath.

Splits appeared among the commanders of the army and the KGB, with some following orders from the leaders of the coup and others declaring their loyalty to Gorbachev or Yeltsin. The ordinary soldiers, meanwhile, showed very little relish for their task when surrounded by hostile crowds. In most of the Republics the local rulers seized the opportunity to declare that they ould take orders from no-one but themselves, thus emphasising the disintegration of central authority which had been one of the motivations of the coup in the first place.

The result is that those 'hardline' sections of the ruling class which might have re-asserted their influence if the coup had succeeded have well and truly shot their bolt. There is no way back for them now. The local rulers in the Republics and the most enthusiastic advocates of economic reform among the ruling class have been given a free hand to move full steam ahead in pursuit of their own aims and interests.

THE WORKING CLASS

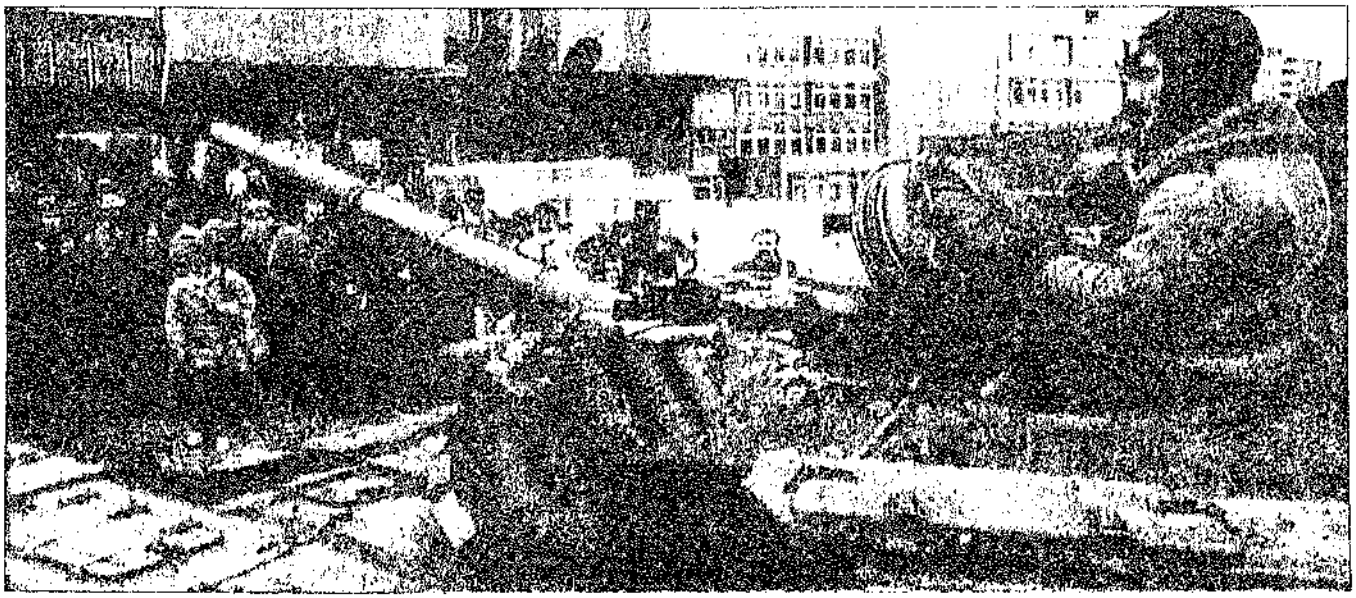
With only the reports which reached us through the filter of the capitalist media o go by, any comments on the role of the working class in these events can be at best only intelligent speculation.

In Moscow, Leningrad and several Republican capitals, crowds numbering hundreds of thousands took to the streets to demonstrate their opposition to the coup. The Russian President Boris Yeltsin issued an appeal for a general strike, but the response to this seemed to be very patchy, apparently receiving support only in Leningrad and among the miners of the Vorkuta and Kuzbass regions.

Why did working class action not appear to be more widespread? Have years of oppression produced a generalised demoralisation and feeling of powerlessness? Perhaps they didn't care if the coup succeeded if it offered some prospect of ending the current economic chaos? Was it a mistrust of Yeltsin, who is after all just one more in a long line of leaders posing as saviour of the people?

The answer probably lies in a mixture of all of these factors, and even just supposing that the last of these explanations held some truth - though the size of the crowds which flocked to support and defend Yeltsin outside the Russian parliament building in Moscow offers little evidence to support such a view - an attitude of cynical apathy is not going to get the working class very far.

For the moment, support for the various nationalisms promoted by the Republics, and for the vague economic and political 'freedoms' peddled by the likes of Boris Yeltsin, seem to be the principal sentiments capable of motivating the working class in the Soviet Union. The overwhelming impression of the August events was that in what was essentially a show-down between opposing factions within the ruling class, where the working class took any action at all, it was to give its support



to one of these ruling class factions, rather than to pursue its own independent class interests.

In this sense the working class's response to the coup follows a pattern evident in recent times, for there have been many instances of militancy among the Soviet working class which have had at their origin issues central to basic working class needs - such as food prices, housing, working conditions and so on - but which have without exception quickly become sidetracked into participation in the ruling class's debates over which is the best way to run the economy and organise the country's political structures.

Meanwhile, the state of the Soviet economy remains desperate. The level of production is likely to be 20% lower this year compared to 1990. Grain stocks are low, a poor harvest is forecast, and food and fuel shortages are likely this winter. The prices of the goods in the poorly-stocked shops are heading for hyper-inflation levels. The idea - apparently shared by workers and bosses alike in the Soviet Union at the moment - that economic restructuring and autonomy for the Republics will solve any of this is pie-in-the-sky. You only have to look at what has happened in the Eastern European states, freed from domination by Moscow and trying to 'privatise' their economies, to get a glimpse of what lies ahead.

Millions of workers will be thrown into unemployment, the wages of those who remain in work will be cut, and price levels will continue to spiral. A potential for independent working class struggle certainly exists if worsening economic conditions shatter the strength of the illusions currently held out by nationalism and democracy.

THE PARTY'S OVER

PUBLICATIONS

THE MARKET AND BUREAUCRACY IN THE USSR. 25p plus postage and package

NOTES ON THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE USSR. 70p including postage and package.

CLASS WAR ON THE HOME FRONT a collection of articles from SOLIDARITY, the paper of the ANTI-PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNIST FEDERATION. It reveals the hidden history of the CLASS WAR before and during the Second World War. Price £2.00 including postage and packing.

BACK ISSUES. We have a few copies of earlier issues. Please send a stamp.

ALF lash out

Animal Rights activists have been getting in the news again. In Manchester they have started a campaign against butchers shops. They've broken ndows and fired bullets at shops. They've even attacked a cheese shop! Meanwhile from Belfast there come reports of the ALF indulging in bomb attacks on butchers. As if the people of Belfast didn't have enough to put up with!

In the past, Animal Rights activists have appeared courageous in their actions and have inspired many by their daring deeds. Often they've hit exactly the right targets. It's difficult not to feel a sense of approval when hunt sabbers stop rich scum galloping over the countryside and tearing foxes and other animals to pieces. Attacks on vivisectionist labs so hit at obvious cruelty and are difficult to condemn. Who didn't feel outrage when the young sabber was killed by the hunter earlier this year?

But as the ALF descends into terrorist tactics in the cities, it is time to look seriously at what they offer. What they preach is a mixture of despair and individualism and the exact opposite of the kind of mass working class activity needed to make a revolution to change society.

The world we live in is a horrible place. Every day millions go hungry, children die from preventable illnesses, millions have no home and many who do have only dreadful slums to live in. The work we do is mostly boring and repetitive, with little scope for being creative. Our relationships are distorted and destroyed by the need to always make a living and only just being able to keep our heads above water, by the shitty houses so many of us live in.

Despairing of this, many turn to charity as a way of making the world a better place. One such form of charity is animal rights. And there can be no doubt that capitalism horribly exploits and abuses animals with great cruelty and suffering.

Animal liberationists see the world as divided in animal exploiters, passive dupes and the heroic few who will set the animals free. Their increasingly violent activities have the advantage of not requiring any action from the majority. Simply the will and the courage of a few are seen as necessary.

Many argue that the exploitation of animals was the original exploitation, which if removed would show the way the the removal of all exploitation. Unfortunately, a look round the shelves of any supermarket will show the falseness of these views. Tescos, Sainsbury's and the others are falling over themselves to produce vegetarian and vegan foods, to market products produced "without cruelty to animals". And it's no surprise that they do. for there is big money to be made in processing soya beans and growing quorn and the many other products. Not only that but, they are expensive to buy. Capitalism is adaptable and can quite easily cope with being "nice" to animals. This is especially true as many vegetarian products come from simple raw materials but require a lot of processing - and hence the chance to make a lot of profit.

Even if we all went vegan, the world would still be a horrible place to live

continued on page 10

DIABETES - PROFITS BEFORE HEALTH

Forty two solicitors in Britain have recently started a legal battle to get comepensation for insulin-dependent diabetics whose lives were put at risk when doctors switched patients to the artificially produced human insulins. The case raises many questions, not least the role of the big pharmaceutical manufacturers in pressurising doctors and clinicians to switch to their product and the subsequent attempt to keep a lid on the problems and drawbacks now known to be associated with the drug.

INSULIN

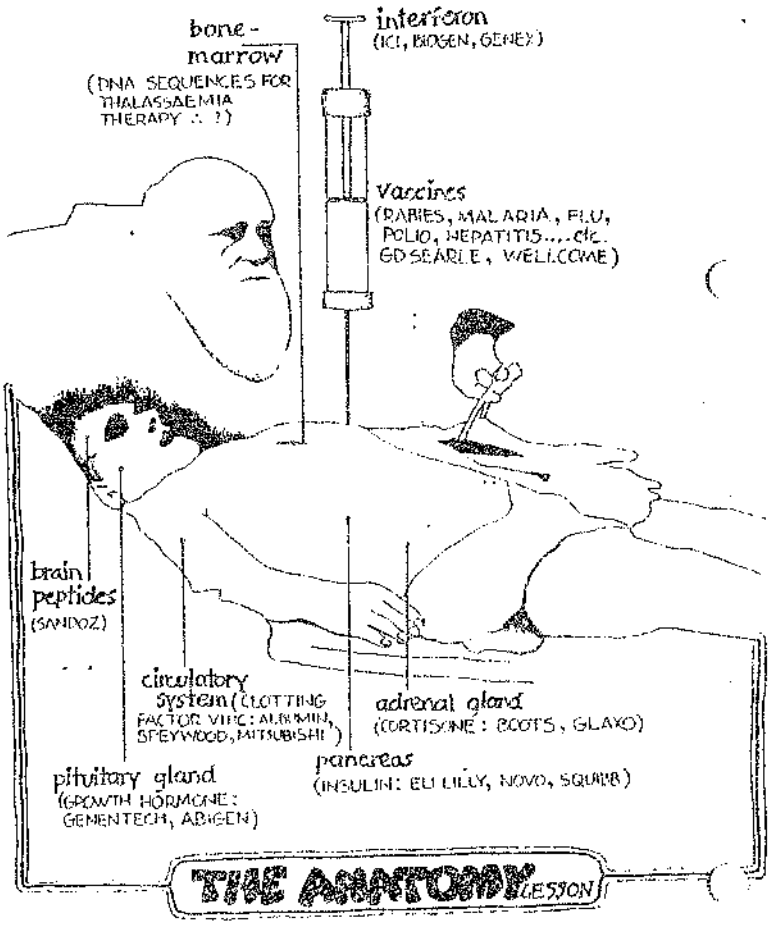
Insulin is something on which millions of diabetics are continually dependent for their health and well-being. It controls the body's storage of sugar. Without it many diabetics would die; with it, they can usually lead relatively normal lives. It is in effect a bulk chemical and the market in the U.S. alone is worth $500 million a year.

Researchers realised, way back in the late seventies, that if you got bacteria to make insulin, a substance that no bacterium had ever made in nature, then the prospect of making a lot of money was not a hopeless fantasy. Insulin was an obvious choice as a commercial goal for this technology since it meets so many of the criteria for a successful, profitable product.

MONOPOLY MONEY

In the U.S. their mass market is controlled by one powerful producer, the Eli Lilly Company, and together with another, Novo Industri of Denmark, it has joint control over eighty per cent of the world market currently worth about $1 billion. Furthermore in a market which is growing, the rate of increase of diabetes, both within particular countries and worldwide is such that the extraction of insulin from the pancreases of slaughtered cattle and pigs would not have been sufficient to service the market.

Beef and pork insulin are not chemically identical to human insulin, a small but significant percentage of diabetics start to produce antibodies to their injected insulin, treating it as a foreign protein. If one could make insulin that was a perfect copy of the human molecule then these problems should not arise. All these considerations addded up to an enormous incentive to develop recombinant



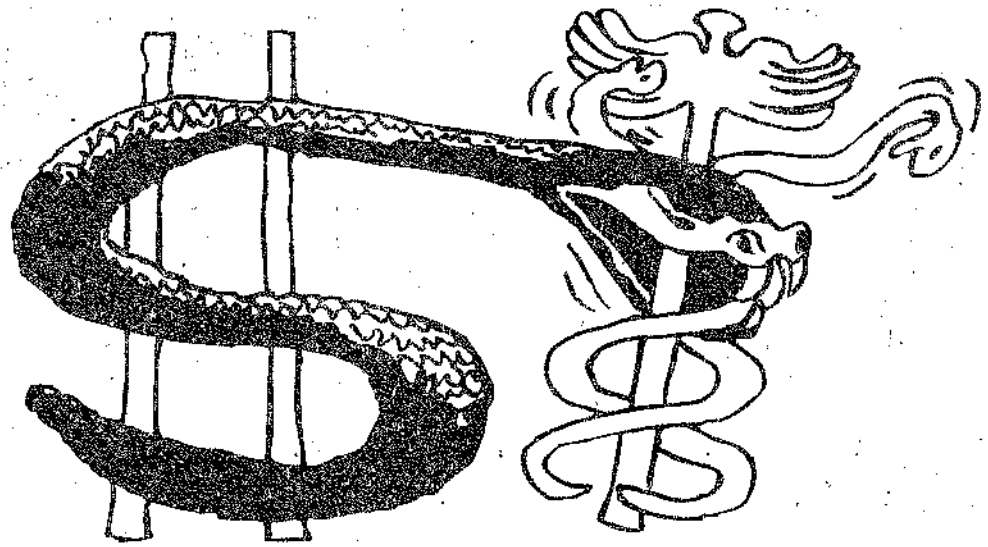
bacteria that can synthesize human insulin.

By 1981, the substance was at the clinical trials stage, with human volunteers receiving shots of it. By 1982, advance publicity material was being sent out by Eli Lilly, in anticipation of its eventual marketing. In May '82, they advertised for some new sales staff. In July '82 the company flew about forty European journalists to San Francisco for five days, as part of the build-up to the eventual launch. All this was part of a massive promotional effort.

MARKETS FIRST - SAFTEY SECOND

In fact since the 1950's that has been

the key tactic of the pharmaceutical companies —relentless promotion of particular products to capture a large market share and recoup the very high development costs in the remaining lifespan of the patents protecting product and process. Markets for specific drugs tend to be shared out by two or three large multinational concerns which are in a position to control prices and to conceal the level of profit from governments who are seeking to investigate why they are being asked to pay such massive and rising bills for drugs. Much of the money that the Government has claimed that it's given to the NHS has gone straight into the pockets of the pharmaceutical companies. The price of new drugs may be high, but, say the defenders of the pharmaceutical companies, it is a price that is worth paying. The crucial assumption in this argument is that improvements in health must follow, and can only follow from the appearance of new drugs.



This case of diabetes and human insulin provides a powerful illustration that this argument is not valid. Although no-one could have predicted the apparent increase in incidents of "hypoglycaemic unawareness" (where diabetes are deprived of the warning symptoms of hypoglycaemia), and its apparent association with biosynthetic human insulin, it is now clear that the rush among doctors over the past eight years to switch patients to it is the result of this huge promotional pressure from manufacturers, not a reflection of medical need.

AN ACCEPTABLE RISK?

No doubt the unexpected number of unexplained deaths will be accounted for in other ways. But this is not a new challenge. Throughout the development of capitalist technology there has been a string of 'unpredictable' health hazards that 'defied' control. Capitalist medicine gave us Thalidomide (the sleeping pill which resulted in foetal deformities) and, more recently, Depo Provera (an injectable contraceptive which was later found to be linked with cancer). In this case diabetics have been used as unsuspecting human guinea pigs. The very recent case of a company, which claimed to have developed the first successful oral insulin tablets, later being found by a vigilant doctor to have been using an adulterated product only illustrates the lengths pharmaceutical companies will go to cash in on this lucrative market regardless of the risk to human life.

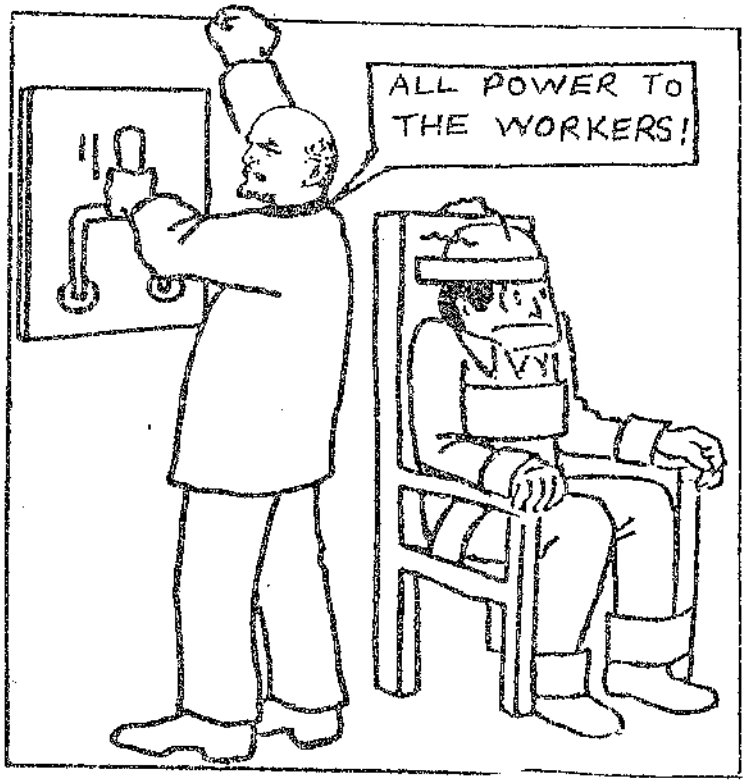
MILITANT —THE PARTY'S OVER

Reports in the papers suggest that Militant is going through a crisis of identity.

Apparently some of the leading lights, like Peter Taafe, think they did so well in the Walton bye-election - when they got just over 2000 votes - that they should leave the Labour party and go it alone. More timorous souls, like Ted Grant, think it better to play safe and keep on beavering away within the Labour party.

We can only say, so what?

What does it matter if they set themselves up as an independent party or keep up the pretence of not really being a party, but only a newspaper?



NATIONALISATION? — NO THANKS!

These are the people who think socialism means nationalising the top 200 companies in the country. As if workers here and abroad haven't had enough of working for nationalised firms. Surely the speed with which the working class of Eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union failed to leap to their defence. tells us what wonders they would be to work for.

IS GORBY A DEGENERATE?

Militant thinks that the Soviet Union was some kind of workers' state - deformed, degenerated or deranged or whatever. They look at workers trudging off to work for companies with highly paid bosses, and earning derisory wages in return and think it has something to do with socialism. They see bosses with special schools, special shops, special health care, special country homes and servants and fail to see a ruling class. They look at buying and selling and profit making and fail to see capitalism.

COPPER'S NARKS

Leading members of Militant in the All Britian Anti Poll Tax Federation wanted to grass up rioters to the police after Trafalgar Square.

It doesn't really matter whether they get kicked out by Kinnock, stay in the Labour party or go it alone. With policies like these and being prepared to tolerate coppers narks in their party, they have nothing to offer the working class. All they do is embroil serious working class activists in the dead-end of Labour party ward meetings. Outside the Labour party we acn expect little except the frenzy of party building and paper selling so beloved of Leninist groups.

Whichever way it goes the result is the same. Activists are burnt out in no time and end up embittered cynics - with piles of copies of their party's paper hidden under the bed.

Militant is a party of state capitalism. We can only hope the day of their demise comes sooner rather than later.

ALF LASH OUT continued

in. Ethiopian peasants don't starve because Americans eat beef - they starve because they don't have enough money to buy food with.

Not only are ALF's actions futile if they hope to truly change the world - but their cavalier disregard for human life just fills most workers with disgust and drives them away from their cause. To misquote a famous German, "when I hear of the ALF, I just want to reach for bacon butty."

Changing the world will need the active participation of massive numbers of working class people. It does not require the heroic actions of an enlightened few. Terrorist groups like ALF deny this. They actively discourage mass action - as indeed they must to protect their own security. By doing this they put off the day when real change can come. As such they have become the enemies of socialist revolution, not its friends.

Police on red alert after new ALF tip-off

MARXISM AND ANARCHISM

INTRODUCTION

Recently we received a letter from a comrade from an Anarchist background who wrote asking the opinion of "Council Communists" on a number of issues. Among these were the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, Centralisation, the reactionary positions taken by Marx and Engels and the whole Marxist/Anarchist divide, Materialism and Dialectics. What follows is an edited form of the reply we sent, which we are printing here because the issues involved are important and will be of interest to our readers in general.

The first point to make is that though we regard the Council Communist movement as one of a number of positive trends from which we draw inspiration, we have never described ourselves with that term. There is no term that we'd all agree "pinpoints" us politically. Perhaps "Libertarian Communist", or even better, "Ultra-Leftist" since we reserve the term "Left" to mean **only** the left wing of Capitalism.

Where your questions ask about "Council Communists" we will answer for "Subversion".

DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

On the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat", this is a term usually misunderstood, and we prefer to explain our positions using straightforward language as much as possible, so let's say we support it if it is understood to mean the collective exercise of power by the new, developing communist society against the remnants of the overthrown class until these latter have become history. We certainly do **not** accept any structures or any power **over** the citizens of the new society (note that we have not said "Working Class" because this class ceases to exist the instant it seizes power since it is then no longer an exploited class of producers who have nothing but their labour power, but a group of people who collectively own the means of production, and who are not even a class, for they then have no class relationship, i.e production relationship, with anyone else. They are the classless sociey in its embryonic stage).

CENTRALISATION

On the question of "Centralisation", this is a term which can mean two distinct things. It can mean everything is run by the whole society acting as a collective decision making unit, as opposed to one group of people having exclusive control over their own patch of land, and another group over another. It can also mean power being exercised by a minority of people in the "centre", whether "elected" or "delegated" or not. This latter we **oppose**. The first, however, seems the ideal way for a Communist society to organize, since if control over a part of the resources of the world resides in the hands of some people & not others, then this is a form of private property, which we adamantly oppose. We do not believe

that people have more right to "own" the resources of their neck of the woods than the rest of Humanity. The "natural" association of people with their geographical area is a limitation which the development of technology (both transport & communications) will more & more enable us to transcend as time goes by.

BAD MARX

On the question of the "Leftist" (i.e. radical capitalist) positions taken by Marx & Engels - support for Social Democracy, Parliament, Nationalism etc - we have differences of opinion , or at least nuance, within Subversion, but the majority of the group certainly rejects these things.

Indeed, we consider ourselves "Marxist" in the sense that we support Marx's method of analysis. We support Historical Materialism and Marx's economic analysis of Capitalism, and while we are very sparing with a term so misused as "dialectic", we nonetheless feel that this understanding of class struggle (and reality in general) as a dynamic process really does mark us out from many other people (including some styling themselves "Marxists").

However, this doesn't mean we accept the political practice of either Marx or the "Marxist Movement" or regard the latter as a "glorious tradition" whose torch we hold aloft.

In fact, we regard the notion of Marxist and Anarchist traditions as only **holding back** revolutionaries today who hold on to **either** of them - an important element in the development of revolutionary ideas is the **rejection** of past ideas in the light of the experience of history, and the 19th Century split between Anarchism & Marxism has little bearing on the class line between revolution and reaction today, as revolutionaries today need to REJECT more than they accept of BOTH traditions.

MATERIALISM

On Materialism, Dialectics etc. there seems no doubt to us that material reality is the determining force behind ideas. Where else do they come from? Do they fall from the sky? Clearly, the ideas which exist at a particular time are the result of a particular level of the historical development of material forces. But none of this implies we should sit back and that only one course of events is possible. The working class is, itself a material force and must struggle.

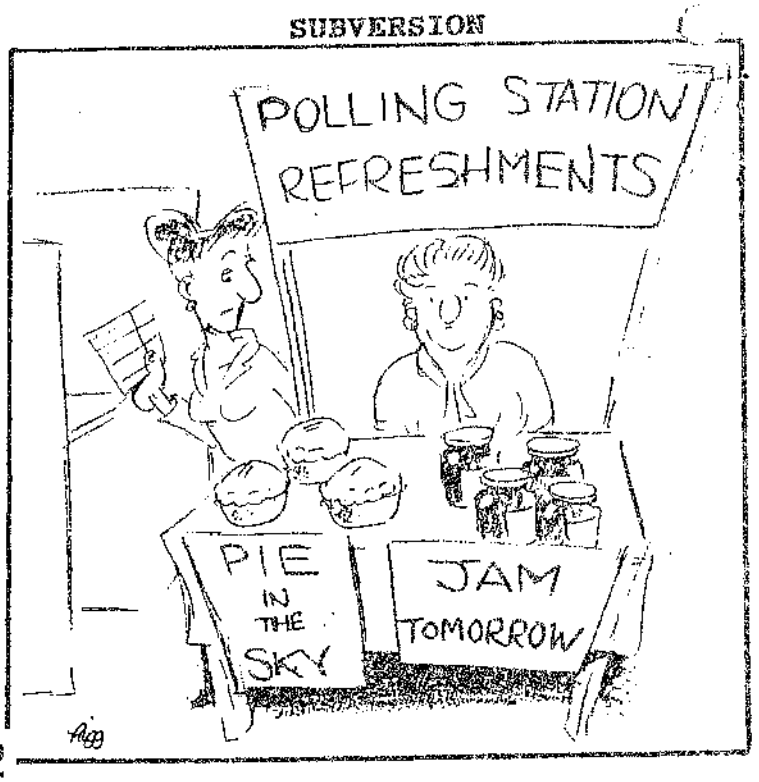
Revolutionary ideas can of course influence events, but this doesn't contradict Materialism as these ideas are of course a product themselves of material forces.

We agree with you, however, that differences over the question of Materialism, Dialectics and the like, does not preclude acting together as revolutionaries.

On your final point about the "reunification" of the two traditions, we simply repeat what we said above. These two traditions are more negative than positive and the conflict between them is nothing to do with us. It's time to look to the Future!

Yours in Comradeship,

SUBVERSION

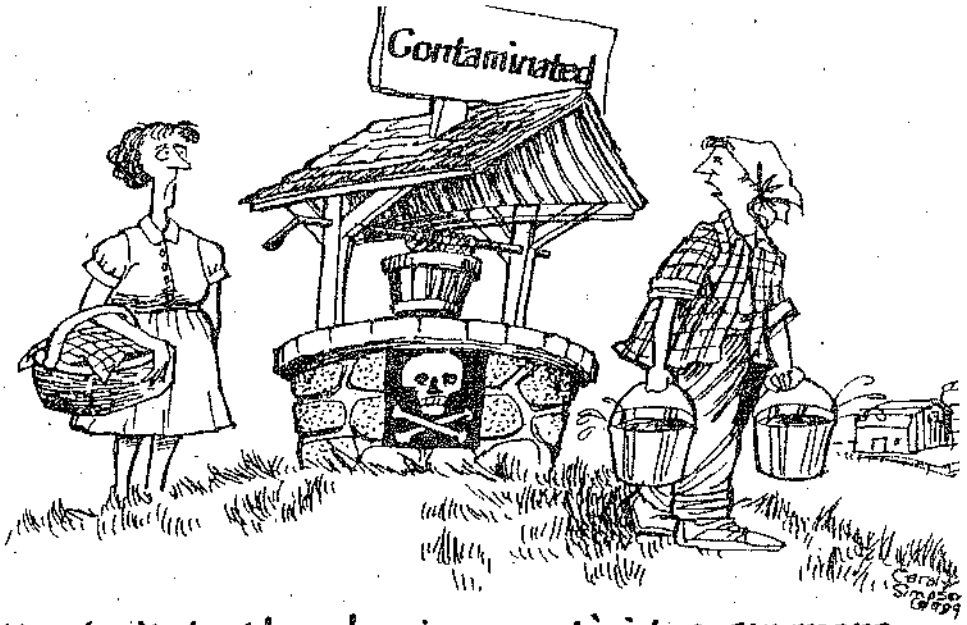


continued from back page

THE NEW WORLD REICH MARCHES ON

this area - next to nothing is spent on sea defences, houses are flimsy, evacuation plans do not exist and people are already undernourished, leaving them vulnerable to epidemics.

There is no point in continuing the list, which could go on almost for ever. The point is that clearly what they call order is nothing of the sort, it is the cruel chaos of a system which cares for nothing except its own maintenace and growth.



"We don't bother buying pesticides anymore. We just spray the crops with our groundwater."

Carol Simpson

In a statement issued by the World Wide Fund for Nature, Friends of the Earth and the American Environmental Defense Fund, the G7 nations are condemned as being "the main cause of the global environmental crisis", which is quite correct. However, the statement goes on to say, "The G7 have the power and the responsibility to save the Earth."

This stands all sense and logic on its head. How can you look at a system which dominates the world with such devestating effect and then turn round and say that it is so powerful only it can save the world?

The G7, the UN, global capitalism as a whole is the problem. The only hope of a solution is for us to unite in overthrowing this monstrosity and building a world based on co-operation and sharing, freedom and equality, a world where we have abolished the money economy, wage labour and the State. To this end we should do all we can to disrupt capitalist normality (refusal to pay, strikes, riots etc, etc) and also try to spread and develop our ideas, build up communication between groups and individuals, create a community of resistance.

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This article originally appeared as a leaflet. It was produced by a group in the Hastings area. They can be contected by writing to YEAR MINUS ONE PRESS, PO BOX 71, HASTINGS, SUSSEX.

SUBVERSION, DEPT 10, 1 NEWTON STREET, MANCHESTER, M1 1HW

THE NEW WORLD REICH MARCHES ON

In the wake of the Gulf massacre global capitalism continues to build its "New World Order" with the "G.7" economic summit in London. Our rulers from the 7 most powerful industrial nations (USA, Japan, France, Britain, Germany, Canada, Italy) met to conspire at maintaining and restructuring their obscene empire of profit and privilege. Top of the agenda was how to integrate the Russian economy and State into the "New World Order".

In their public pronouncements the bosses and politicians try to make out that this "New World Order" of theirs is about peace, co-operation and well-being for the people of the world. Nothing could be further from the truth; it is more of the same (except worse) in a new package. Under the "New World Order" we will suffer the same plague of horrors that capitalism has always signified - war, poverty, famine, alienation, ecologocal destruction.

UNS

The "political communique" issued by the G' summit refers to the "challenges" facing the "international community" and calls for the strengthening of the UN. this is doublespeak with a vengeance - they know nothing of community; the system they stand for, capitalism, destroys it everywhere. The "challenges" that they speak of are nothing to do with our need to halt the collapse into a chaos of war, famine and ecological catastrophe but their need to continue to impose the system which produces them. They speak of the "promise" and "vision" of the UN (which might be the beginning of the World Government that some of this filth doubtless aspires to) while that organisation is still wiping blood and sand from its boots after its display of power and violence in the Gulf.

Part of the dictionary definition of "order" is "the condition in which everything is controlled as it should be, is in its right place, performing its correct function etc".....and what does capitalist "order", New or Old, consist of?

* The world produces a surplus of grain (360 million metric tonnes in 1988) yet millions starve.

* In this country while rich scum flaunt their wealth in an arrogant display at Ascot, people beg in streets and sleep rough.

* Hundreds of oil wells burn out of control in Kuwait and may do so for years to come. The sky is black, black snow has fallen in Nepal. Rivers and lakes of oil from damaged but not ignited wells form in the desert.

* In the "prosperous" industrialised nations, life for the majority consists of boring, meaningless work, economic insecurity, stress and alienation.

* The recent cyclone in Bangladesh killed hundreds of thousands while tornadoes of comparable strength which occured in the USA around the same time killed only a few hundred. This disparity is due entirely to the grinding poverty imposed on the people of

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Subversion

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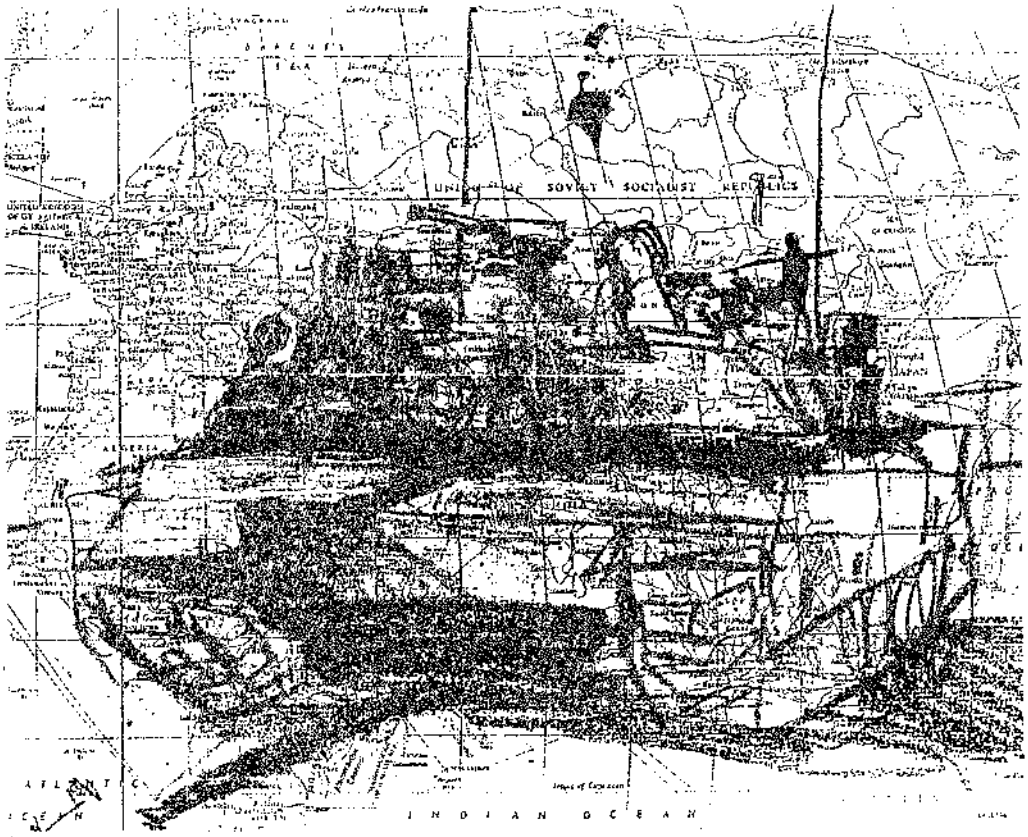


New World Order is the Prelude to War!

Nestles Kills Babies!

Animal Liberation or Social Revolution?

Communism in Britain.

free

Subversion, Dept 10
1 Newton st., Piccadilly, Manchester
M1 1HW

What We Stand For.

Members of SUBVERSION all agree with the following principles. We believe that they provide a minimum basis for revolutionary organisation.

* We are against all forms of capitalism; private, state and self-managed.

* We are for communism, which is a classless society in which all goods are distributed according to needs and desires.

* We are actively opposed to all ideologies which divide the working class, such as religion, sexism and racism.

* We are against all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" movements such as the IRA.

* The working class (wage labourers, the unemployed, housewives, etc), is the revolutionary class; only its struggle can liberate humanity from scarcity, war and economic crisis.

* Trade Unions are part of the capitalist system, selling our labour power to the bosses and sabotaging our struggles. We support independent working class struggle, in all areas of life under capitalism, outside the control of the trade unions and all political parties.

* We totally oppose all capitalist parties, including the Labour party and other organisations of the capitalist left. We are against participation in fronts with these organisations.

* We are against participation in parliamentary elections; we are for the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class and the establishment of organisations of working class power.

* We are against sectarianism and support principled co-operation among revolutionaries.

* We exist to actively participate in escalating the class war towards communism.

About Us.

SUBVERSION is a group of revolutionaries based in the north of England.

We all agree with the statement "WHAT WE STAND FOR", which is printed on this page.

We work together to produce this bulletin and hold regular discussion meetings in the Manchester area. We usually hold these meetings jointly with members of the ACF

If you like the politics of SUBVERSION, why not write to us or come along to one of our meetings.

want to help?

If you want to help us there are a number of things you can do.

WRITE TO US

We welcome articles for inclusion in SUBVERSION.

SEND A LETTER

We always welcome letters and will try to answer any questions you raise.

TAKE EXTRA COPIES

We want SUBVERSION to be as widely re as possible and will happily send you a bundle.

SEND US YOUR MONEY!

Although SUBVERSION is free, we rely heavily on donations to let us carry on producing it.

Please make cheques, postal orders, etc. payable to SUBVERSION.
Write to: SUBVERSION, DEPT 10, 1 NEWTON ST, MANCHESTER M1 1HW

PUBLICATIONS

We have available copies of some back issues of SUBVERSION.

SUBVERSION 7: Workers solidarity; Charity Makes Us Sick; Education.

SUBVERSION 8: The Soviet Coup; ALF; Diabetes; New World Order.

The New World Order is the Prelude to War!

Alongside the chaos, competition and military conflict in areas of the world released from the grip of the old Soviet Empire, tentative steps are being taken by a German dominated Europe and Japan to loosen their ties to the USA and carve out independent areas of influence.

For the moment the USA remains the only real world power. Despite the weakening of the USA economy relative to Germany and Japan, the sheer volume of the USA's GNP (Gross National Product) relative to world GNP, the supremacy of the dollar in world trade and most importantly its military supremacy, have ensured its survival as the only world dominant power. But with the removal of the USSR as a military threat to Europe and Japan, the differences which were latent between the three post-World War II allies have begun to surface.

IRAQ WAR

The cajoling of Europe and Japan into the alliance against Iraq was a reminder to them that the USA was still calling the tune, but it prompted both to take the first faltering steps towards a more independent political and military line.

FORTRESS EUROPA

Germany, assisted by France, has been leading the way in pushing European integration and expanding the EEC by absorbing the advanced economies of countries like Austria, Norway and Sweden. The re-unification of Germany has already extended the borders of the EEC eastwards to influence the new "liberated" nations of the Soviet Empire. Germany's experience of trying to absorb the bankrupt economy of its eastern partner has, however, made it cautious about any rapid expansion of the EEC further east to include the eager states of Poland, Czechoslovakia and the Baltics etc. They are in a worse state than the old East Germany. Rather it seeks to more fully integrate the rest of Western Europe under its domination and to influence Eastern Europe in a selective way, without all the burdens of full EEC membership.

The British ruling class, on the other hand, is divided over the way forward. In conjunction with the USA, Britain has sought a wider, more diluted European union. Whilst Germany and France have sought to strengthen the Western European Union as an independent military arm of the expanded EEC, Britain, on behalf of the USA has acted to restrain this development. The growing strength of German influence can nonetheless be seen in its success in guiding EEC policy towards recognition of Slovenia and Croatia in the Yugoslavian war.

SUN RISING AGAIN?

Japan has been more cautious still, having benefitted most from a liberal free trade policy abroad without the burdens of large scale military expenditure. But as the USA and Europe are forced back into more protectionist measures, it too will have to consider consolidating its already strong economic dominance of S.E. Asia.

Japan is already forcing Australia and New

Zealand to make some hard decisions about their future economic and political orientation. If China goes the same way as the USSR, Japan could be the main beneficiary. We can expect Japan to become increasingly forceful in its negotiations with Russia over the regaining of territory lost during World War II. the USA may yet regret the encouragement it has given Japan to loosen its constitutional restraints on military action abroad.

The USA itself has been busily pursuing further integration of the economis of North and Central America through a free trade agreement with Canada and similar proposals for Mexico.

NEW BLOCS FOR OLD

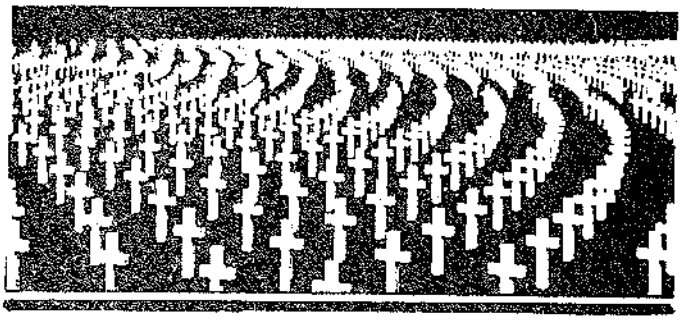
As the economic crisis deepens, trade disputes between the USA and Europe that still remain unresloved through the GATT negotiations, are liable to become unbridgeable as each bloc seeks to protect its own trade within new borders, whilst fiercely competing over the rest of the world.

Nobody can predict how the world will divide up in the future. The present situation is extremely fluid. There are clear tendencies towards the emergence of three new power blocs to replace the old two. These are based on the USA, Germany/Europe and Japan. But there are also many uncertainties, in particular the direction of the new Russian dominated "Commonwealth" and the fate of China.

MILITARY EXPENDITURE AS % OF GNP 1987

ISRAEL	16%
USSR	11.4%
USA	6.5%
UK	4.6%
AUSTRALIA	2.7%
FRANCE	4%
SWEDEN	2.8%
W.GERMANY	3%
E.GERMANY	4.5%
SWITZERLAND	1.8%
JAPAN	1%

We can say with certainty that far from the disintegration of the USSR leading to a new world of peace and prosperity policed by the USA and the UN, it can only lead to further chaos as competition between the existing dominant economis to secure their position in the world is heightened.



FASCISM AND ANTI-FASCISM

BY JEAN BARROT.

THIS PAMPHLET, PRODUCED BY PIRATE PRESS, IS AVAILABLE FROM US FOR ONE POUND, INCLUDING POSTAGE AND PACKING.

POLL TAX PRISONER SUPPORT NETWORK

On October 12 in Birmingham a conference was held to discuss how we could more effectively support poll tax prisoners. The meeting identified key areas in which support could be improved and formed a national network through which information can be coordinated and distributed.

The network consists of regional prisoner support groups, communicating between themselves as and when prisoners are sent down, and distributing information in their area. It is hoped to produce prisoner lists fortnightly, and a newsletter every other month. It was agreed that newsletters would be produced in rotation, each Prisoners Support Group producing two newsletters, with resources such as printing etc being pooled.

If you wish to receive or pass on any news/info please contact the PSG nearest your area. We need to hear from you if you know of anyone being sent down because of the poll tax; and whether or not they want publicity and support. The national contact number for the network is :(071) 738 7586 (for news of latest jailings). Alternatively contact the nearest local group:

- **Birmingham** Poll Tax Prisoners Support Group: c/o (021) 565 4217 (Chris or Craig).
- **Avon** Defendants Campaign: c/o: 84 Colston St, Bristol BS1 (0272) 248 274 or (0272) 772648
- **East Midlands:** Nottingham Defence Fund: c/o Box NDF, 72 Radford Rd, Hyson Green, Nottingham, NG3 5GN. (0602) 222153
- **London:** TSDC Prisoners Support Group: c/o 506 Brixton Rd, Brixton London SW9 8EN. (071) 738 7586
- **Welsh** Campaign Against Poll Tax Imprisonment: PO Box 10, Caerfilli, Mid-Glamorgan, Cymru. Or contact Mark on (0978) 843401.
- **North-West** Anti-Poll Tax Forum: c/o (061) 707 1584 (Martin)
- **Leeds** Anti-Poll Network: c/o (0532) 653 816 (Pat) or (0532) 623 822
- **North-East** (Newcastle): c/o (091) 232 8761 (Fiona/Day) or (091) 276 2953 (Tony)
- **Sussex** Poll Tax Resisters Support Fund, c/o 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton. (0273) 671 213
- **Lothian** Hotline (031) 557 1595

Animal Liberation or Social Revolution?

Debate:

We have received a number of letters about an article we published in SUBVERSION 8, ALF LASH OUT. Here we are printing one from a comrade in Hastings. Anyone wishing to contact him can do so by writing to "year minus one press, PO Box 71, Hastings, E Sussex."

The letter is followed by a slightly tered version of the reply we sent him.

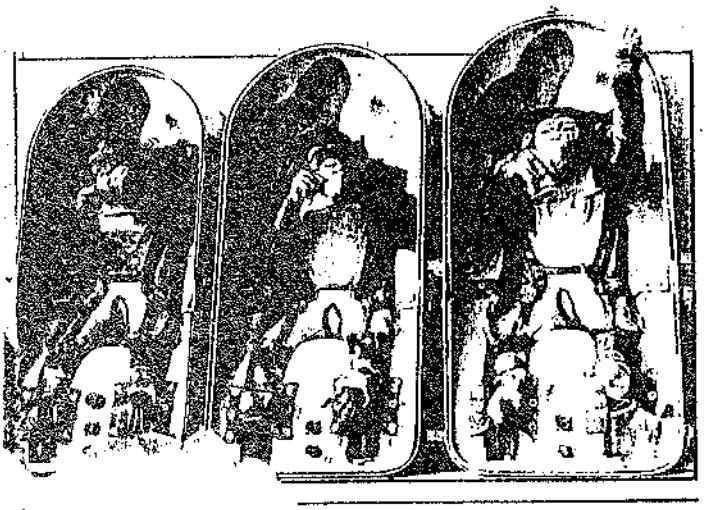
Dear Comrades,

The main purpose of this letter is to respond to the article "ALF LASH OUT" which appeared in Subversion 8.

The main thrust of this article is to condemn ALF activity as being "terrorist" and hence anti-working class since it discourages mass action and intimidates people. No attempt is made to deal with the theory behind the action (that the domestication and exploitation of non-human animals is oppressive and to be opposed) although presumable the author doesn't accept this. For some reason attacks on vivisection and hunting appear to be OK but actions against the expoiltation of non-human animals for food are not. Let me assure you that animal farming involves at least as much violence and exploitation as vivisection and hunting and on an incomparably larger scale. You seem to think it funny or extreme that the ALF should target a cheese shop but it is simply consistent; the dairy industry and the beef industry are the same thing, you can't have the one without the other. If you attack butchers why not a cheese shop?

I'm sorry but it really is nonsense to condemn ALF activity as terrorist, and to accuse them of "cavalier disregard for human life" is as absurd as it is slanderous. To my knowledge no human being has ever been harmed in any ALF action, great care being taken to ensure this ... yet one hunt sab has now been killed, activists have been seriously injured on numerous occasions and recently an unarmed ALF group on an operation were arrested by armed cops with helicopter back up. Who are the terrorists?

ALF activity primarily consists of sabotage which has a long standing and proud place in the history of working class struggle. Would you condemn the workers "hit squads" which emerged during the miners' strike? I presume not. If you oppose the politics of animal liberation then you should do so politically, not by trying to smear people as terrorists.



You refer to the fact that capitalism is falling over itself to provide highly processed vegetarian and vegan products. Of course it is, that is the nature of the market economy. Similarly the supermarket shelves are atuffed with so-called "green" commodities. "Anything you can sell, sell" is the motto. This doesn't mean, as you are well aware, that capitalism has ceased to wreck and pillage our planet and not does the fact that you can buy Quorn products or meat in Safeways mean that capitalism is "being nice to animals" - what a ridiculous suggestion!

Your comparison of animal liberation work with charity is also wrong. When people gave money to "Live Aid" that was charity. If people give money to the RSPCA out of

guilt or something, that also is charity; but what about the group who, in response to the Ethiopian famine, broke into and damaged EC grain stores, was that charity? Well, if it wasn't then neither is physically opposing the exploitation of non-human animals. Or are you saying that people should only ever act in their own immediate self-interest? Or are you saying that the case of non-human animals is different because not being human they count for nothing?

Having just re-read the aricle "ALF LASH OUT" I see that you do admit that capitalism inflicts violence and oppression on non-human animals, you even commend past ALF actions. If you are prepared to condemn activity around these issues now would you also say to women, blacks, gays etc that they should "wait until after the revolution".

In conclusion I would repeat what I said to you in a previous correspondence on this matter:

"Animal liberation is an important issue revolutionaries to address because it is very linked to a project which is vital, namely a reappraisal of what exactly is and should be the relationship of our species to the planet we inhabit and our fellow creatures. The absolute schism between "Man" and nature has led us to the nightmare of ecological disaster and totalitarianism whcih is the 20th century.

In solidarity,
Steve.

Two Soviet technicians remove the dog ZYGANKA from a space flight simulator

Dear Steve,

Many thanks for your letter discussing our article "ALF Lash Out" in Subversion 8. As promised this is an attempt at a proper reply.

We feel that your letter confuses a number of points. You say that ALF activity "primarily consists of sabotage which has a long standing and proud place in the history of working class struggle." You ask whether we would "condemn the workers 'hit squads' which emerged during the miners strike?" We do not believe it is possible to equate the two.

There is of course, one similarity between the actions of ALF and the miner's hit squads. Both are the product of movements faced with a downturn and the prospect of defeat. Had the Miners' Strike been winning, it is doubtful whether such activities would have been necessary. It was because the miners were isolated and on the road to defeat that hit squads were necessary. ALF is really in a similar situation, isn't it? They'd like there to be a mass movement fighting animal cruelty, but it doesn't exist. Our contention, of course, is that such elitist, secretive activity militates against the existence of a mass movement.

There is a vital difference between the two. The actions of the miners was in defence of their own living standards and conditions of life. This is something that they shared in common with other workers, eg working class women, blacks and gays. All struggle in their own self-interest and as such their actions can be seen as part of the struggle for socialism - something which will only come about by the mass of workers consciously fighting for it.

The actions of ALF and others are on the contrary not the actions of one group struggling for its own interests. Unfortunately, animals are unable to do this. As such they have no 'rights'. What animals have are the actions of altruistically minded humans who object to the way animals are treated. This is really not so different to the kind of charity initiated by Live Aid and so on.

We've said before that we don't object to charity as such. All of us reach into our pockets for some worthy cause or other and some members of Subversion go further. But we don't confuse this with revolutionary activity. It is merely our attempts to

alleviate some of the problems around us and we recognise that such efforts are pitiful in comparison to the destruction and waste daily perpetrated by capitalism.

We also object to bombings because they are terroristic. Sometimes bombers get their intended targets and sometimes those targets deserve what they get. Equally often the victims are ordinary members of the working class who just happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, or in ALFs case young children who happen to be in the right car at the wrong time. Bombings can never be accurately targetted. They always have a randomness about them. As such they have no place in the armoury of the working class.

We do not, of course, equate the activities of terrorist groups with those of the state. When it comes to terror the state is in a league of its own. It was after all the British and American states who massacred thousands of Iraqi civilians and fleeing soldiers. The states terrorism is routine and incredibly vicious. Even such experienced practitioners in terror as the IRA as mere babies in comparison.

We are against cruelty to animals for a number of reasons. One is that cruelty begets cruelty. Those who habitually abuse and degrade animals, or are associated with it, find it easy to be equally cruel to humans. This is particularly so when one group defines another as being less than human. Nazi Germany was an obvious example, as was Stalinist Russia and today's Yugoslavia.

We are against cruelty to animals because the food it produces is of an inferior quality. We are against it because intensive farming uses up enormous quantities of energy and foodstuffs which could be better used to feed hungry people and not contribute to global warming. You are obviously aware just how much vegetable protein is used to produce tiny amounts of animal protein. The animal protein that is produced is usually of an inferior quality to that produced in more humane ways.

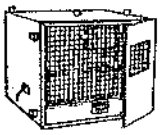
We are against much animal experimentation because it is unreliable and because it teaches many people the kind of cruelty we described above. We are against it simply because it is cruel and because we can't believe a communist society could be built based on cruelty.

On the other hand we believe some use of

New concepts in animal cage systems become a reality at Harford.

- *Bookkeeper cages*
- *File Clerk fences*
- *Receptionist receptacles*
- *Word Processor pens*
- *Xerox Girl cages*
- *Secretary stalls*

Custom-Engineered animal cage systems



Harford

Metal Products, Inc.
Building 101

animals is necessary. Maybe we are biased, but members of Subversion have friends and family whose lives depend on medication produced from dead animals. We fervently hope that a socialist society would render this unnecessary. We described the problems of diabetics in our last issue, many of whom have died as a result of having their animal based insulin replaced by synthetic insulin. Another example is cystic fibrosis. This effects 6000 people in Britain. It usually kills people before they reach the age of 30. Untreated they'd be lucky to reach two. The successful treatment of this condition requires the routine taking of capsules of digestive enzymes derived from pigs. The techniques for heart and lung transplantation that many CF people need were first practised on animals. Their need for concentrated protein is such that they cannot be vegetarian and they must eat meat.

Maybe one day there will be adequate therapies for diabetics and cystic fibrosis sufferers that don't require the slaughter of animals. We certainly hope so.

In the meantimes we see no contest between a cow and a human being.

SYLVIA PANKHURST — ANTI-PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNIST

During a lifetime of active political involvement stretching from her teenage years in the late 1890s to her death in 1960, Sylvia Pankhurst embraced a wide variety of causes. Nowadays, everyone can pick and choose a little bit of Sylvia's career to idolise - feminists, pacifists, anti-fascists, assorted leftists from Barbara Castle to the SWP... the list is seemingly endless. But there is another aspect to Sylvia Pankhurst - one which is usually trivialised, distorted or ignored: the years from the end of the First World War to the mid-1920s when she was one of the clearest advocates of anti-parliamentary communism.

FROM REFORM TO REVOLUTION

The seeds of Sylvia's evolution from the militant suffragette reformism for which she is best known to her anti-parliamentary communism of 1917-24 were sown during the First World War. By then differences over the aims and strategies of the suffrage movement had already caused Sylvia to split from her mother Emmeline and sister Christabel. One of these disagreements concerned Sylvia's recognition of the need for working class women and men to fight together for certain common needs and interests - something Emmeline and Christabel rejected as a diversion from the main aim of winning the vote.

While Emmeline and Christabel went on to campaign with patriotic fervour in support of the war, Sylvia and her East London Federation of the Suffragettes - who opposed the war - became immersed in the struggle against the terrible harshness and poverty of working class existence during wartime.

The efforts which Sylvia helped to initiate in London's East End are well-documented in most accounts of her life: the distribution of free milk for babies, the restaurants providing free or 'cost-price' food, the day nurseries for children of working mothers, the co-operative toy factory to provide creative employment, the stream of complaining letters and deputations to the civil and military authorities.

What is usually concealed, however, is the realisation which dawned through all this effort: that the only permanent solution to working class problems lay not through trying to patch up or reform capitalism, but through destroying it and in its place establishing a new, communist, society. As Sylvia declared in 1919: "ALL MY EXPERIENCE SHOWED THAT IT WAS USELESS TRYING TO PALLIATE AN IMPOSSIBLE SYSTEM. THIS IS A WRONG SYSTEM AND HAS GOT TO BE SMASHED."

WORKERS' COUNCILS

As for the question of how to smash capitalism, the answer was provided in 1917 by the Russian revolution, which Sylvia and her comrades interpreted as the model of a soviet or workers' council revolution. In other words, one which had been accomplished by political organs formed by committees of recallable delegates elected by and answerable to mass assemblies of the working class. Working class people elsewhere in the world could imitate their Russian comrades and use this same form - the workers' councils - as the means to struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a communist society.

To be an anti-parliamentary communist, as Sylvia had become, not only meant rejecting Parliament as a ruling class institution which could play no part in working class emancipation; it also meant rejecting the domination of leaders and encouraging through class struggle the development of the working class's own initiative, self-organisation and class consciousness.

Sylvia expressed her complete rejection of her suffragette past no more clearly than after the 1923 General Election, in which eight women were elected as MPs: "Women can no more put virtue into the decaying parliamentary institution than can men: it is past reform and must disappear...The woman professional politician is neither more nor less desirable than the man professional politician: the less the world has of either the better it is for it... To the women, as to men, the hope of the future lies not through Parliamentary reform, but free Communism and soviets."

STATE CAPITALISM versus COMMUNISM

While pointing out the inspiration of the soviets or workers' councils of the Russian revolution in Sylvia Pankhurst's political outlook during her communist years, there should be no mistaking her clear opposition to the social system which rapidly emerged under the Bolshevik dictatorship. In 1924 Sylvia condemned the new rulers of Russia as "prophets of centralised efficiency, trustification, State control, and the discipline of the proletariat in the interests of increased production...the Russian workers remain wage slaves, and very poor ones, working not from free will, but under compulsion of economic need, and kept in their subordinate position by State coercion."

The state capitalism introduced in Russia by the Bolsheviks was completely at odds with Sylvia's vision of future communist society as a stateless, classless, world human community, in which everyone would co-operate freely to the best of their abilities in the abundant production of everything they needed, without money, markets or the wages system.

THE LABOUR PARTY

In Britain the Labour Party and trade unions had been in the forefront of support for the war, helping to organise and sustain the production of armaments and the recruitment of cannon-fodder to be slaughtered in a conflict from which only the ruling class could benefit. In Germany, the council movement of sailors, soldiers and workers which sprang up in the revolution of November 1918 was eventually crushed mainly by the bloody repression organised by the Labour Party's German counterpart, the SPD.

The political lesson which Sylvia and her comrades drew from these experiences was that the Labour Party was as dangerous an enemy of the working class movement as all the avowedly capitalist parties - a judgement borne out time and time again by subsequent events. Because of this, anti-parliamentarians rejected any involvement with the Labour Party. But their views on this issue were opposed by Lenin, who attacked the international anti-parliamentary communist tendency (in Britain, Holland, Germany and Italy) in his pamphlet "Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder". When the Communist Party of Great Britain emerged in 1920, it was formed not on the basis of the programme put forward by the anti-parliamentarians, but on the tactics proposed by Lenin, including participation in Parliament and the trade unions, and affiliation to the Labour Party.

While the CPGB basked in the warmth of Bolshevik approval, Sylvia and her comrades were forced to the margins of political life. To their credit they persisted with their communist propaganda, but the demoralisation which set in after the defeat of the international revolutionary wave of 1917-21 saw increasing numbers dropping out of the movement - including Sylvia Pankhurst herself.

It was her experience of participation in the real movement of the working class, in the context of radical international class struggle, which brought Sylvia Pankhurst to communist ideas. We look to the day when millions upon millions of working class people will undergo the same experiences, and turn the vision of communism which Sylvia Pankhurst held into reality. In the meantime, the anti-parliamentary communist ideas which she put forward remain an inspiration to the present-day revolutionary groups which seek to intervene in the class struggle to help move it in a communist direction.

Workers' Dreadnought

Tells How to Get
THE
SOVIETS
in BRITAIN.

Plenty for all when we Abolish the Capitalists.
Equality for the Workers.
Do Away with Idlers.

ABOVE
A page from the weekly Workers' Dreadnought, edited by Sylvia Pankhurst from 1917 to 1924. All the quotes used in this leaflet are taken from Sylvia's articles in the Dreadnought.

CLASS WAR ON THE HOME FRONT a collection of articles from SOLIDARITY, the paper of the ANTI-PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNIST FEDERATION. It reveals the hidden history of the CLASS WAR before and during the Second World War. Price £2.00 including postage and packing.

Communism in Britain.

REVIEW

Bob Jones, LEFT-WING COMMUNISM IN BRITAIN 1917-21...AN INFANTILE DISORDER? (Pirate Press, Sheffield, 1991, 16 pages).

If there has been a sight to savour amidst the recent collapse of the Russian bloc it is surely the complete bewilderment which this has caused among the various Communist Parties throughout the rest of the world.

Cast adrift by the Moscow bureaucrats who funded them and fed them their political lines, and with the so-called "communist" system which they worshipped for so long now in utter ruins, one by one the CPs have been calling it a day.

At a special congress last November a majority of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) voted to dissolve the Party. Apparently a few diehard Stalinists are determined to carry on under the CPGB label. Yet the heritage they cling to could hardly be less glorious. As Bob Jones's excellent account of events surrounding the formation of the Party in 1920 shows, the CPGB has <u>always</u> been a counter-revolutionary outfit.

From the outset the CPGB's politics were cast in a mould manufactured in Moscow. By 1920 it had become obvious to Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders that the survival of the infant state-capitalist regime in Russia depended on restoring normal relations with their capitalist counterparts elsewhere in Europe. One way of trying to achieve this would be to create mass movements in these countries, capable of exerting enough pressure to sway the policies of their own governments in Russia's favour. As far as Britain was concerned, this meant forming a CP which would affiliate to the Labour Party and also try to win seats in Parliament.

Such tactics were quite alien to the ideas of most revolutionaries in Britain at that time. As Bob Jones puts it, "For anyone thinking in terms of communism... it was simply inconceivable to regard the Labour Party as having anything at all to contribute", while parliamentarism was widely rejected in favour of a belief in "the ability of the working class to create its own organs of self-government in any revolutionary situation".

The "anti-parliamentarians" who held these views were clearly an obstacle in the path of a strategy aimed at preserving Bolshevik power in Russia, and they had to be swept out of the way. To put it bluntly, the type of CP sought by the Bolsheviks could only be formed in Britain by destroying the existing revolutionary movement.

The main aim of Bob Jones's pamphlet is to describe how this happened, and why. Although Lenin & co. emerge as the main culprits, he also blames certain elements within the revolutionary movement in Britain for their "complete abdication of critical judgement when basic principles and beliefs (were) put to the test by supposed friends and allies."

It is certainly true that many British revolutionaries who had wholeheartedly supported the Bolshevik revolution were at first thrown off balance by the tactics proposed by Lenin. But among a few sections of the movement at least, the realisation did eventually dawn that if the policies which the Bolsheviks were pursuing internationally had nothing to do with communist revolution, this was because the policies which were being implemented within Russia itself didn't either.

At several points Bob Jones describes the pre-CPGB revolutionary movement in Britain in terms of a "rapprochement between Marxists and anarchists". In reality only <u>some</u> Marxists and <u>some</u> anarchists were moving closer together on the basis of a common revolutionary platform. Then, as during every other period before and since, the line dividing revolution-

aries from the rest cut sharply through the heart of both the Marxist and the anarchist camps.

Some Marxists and anarchists ended up as loyal members of the CPGB. Others remained outside and stuck to their revolutionary principles. Bob Jones ends by mentioning an example of the latter: the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation (APCF), "which was to keep alive the hopes of libertarian communism for the next thirty years". A collection of articles from the press of the APCF before and during the Second World War, called Class War on the Home Front, is available from Subversion, price £2.00.

Anyone wanting to know more about the "anti-parliamentary communist" critique of the Bolsheviks' tactics for Western Europe should also read Herman Gorter's Open Letter to Comrade Lenin (1920), which costs £2.50 from Wildcat at BM Cat, London WC1N 3XX.

Copies of Bob Jones's pamphlet can be ordered from Subversion or direct from the publishers, Pirate Press, Black Star, PO Box 446, Sheffield, S1 1NY, price £1.00.

which was aimed at outlawing the marketing of powdered milk. Nestles refused to abide by it. After a further three years of boycott and lousy publicity, Nestles apparently caved in and promised to abide by the WHO Code. At this point the boycott was called off.

Nestles used the end of the boycott as a way of refining their techniques.

Essentially they side-stepped the Code.

HOSPITALS STOP BREAST FEEDING

All over the third world Nestles have paid for the building of hospitals. Doesn't that absolve them of some of their sins? No. because the hospitals have been cleverly designed to cause the failure of established breast milk feeding in the early days of a baby's life. The nursery and mother's rooms are seperate. The effect of seperating mother and baby allows for the hospital nurses to give bottled milk to the babies.It seems strange that the nurses should give bottled milk. The problem is that they are beholden to the company which supplied them with their nice, shiny, new hospital. The whole situation stinks. In the early days of breast feeding it is the frequent suckling of the baby which leads to the mother being able to make enough milk. To enable this to happen, mother and baby need to be together - not in distant rooms. So Nestle's apparent generosity creates an environment designed to lead to failure.

BOTTLE FEEDING = POVERTY

In the west many people see this failure as a shame, not a disaster. In the third world it is without doubt a disaster. The parents are then forced by the situation to bottle feed. In the hospital the milk is supplied free in pre-sterilised bottles. When the mothers leave the hospital, often returning to shanty towns the purchase of the milk can take up half of the weeks budget for the family. Sterilising needs fresh clean water, fuel for boiling the water and an education to understand the importance of all this. These are all scarce resources resulting in unsterilised, over-diluted powdered milk. And the result of all this - dead babies.

Nestles, Boots, Farleys, are prime examples of how capitalism works for the sake of profit. They don't make nuclear weapons or dioxins or cigarettes but the effect is the same. Nothing short of a change in the political and social systems on a world wide scale will stop the sort of murder they and other capitalists are guilty of - a series of murders which happen only to satisfy greed.

If you want more information on breast feeding and the effects of the marketing ploys of the likes of Nestles, then you could write to: BABY MILK ACTION, 6 REGENT TERRACE, CAMBRIDGE, CB2 1AA.

Nestles Kills Babies!

HOW TO MAKE A FORTUNE.

1. Take a natural, healthy and free foodstuff then convince millions of women that it is unsafe, insanitary and old-fashioned.

2. Manufacture an alternative that is unnatural, unhealthy and expensive. Convince millions of women that it is safer, more modern and in every way better than the natural foodstuff.

3. Engage marketing companies to push your product. Give free samples to women when they are at their most vulnerable and open to suggestion.

4. Ignore evidence that your product is killing one baby every two minutes.

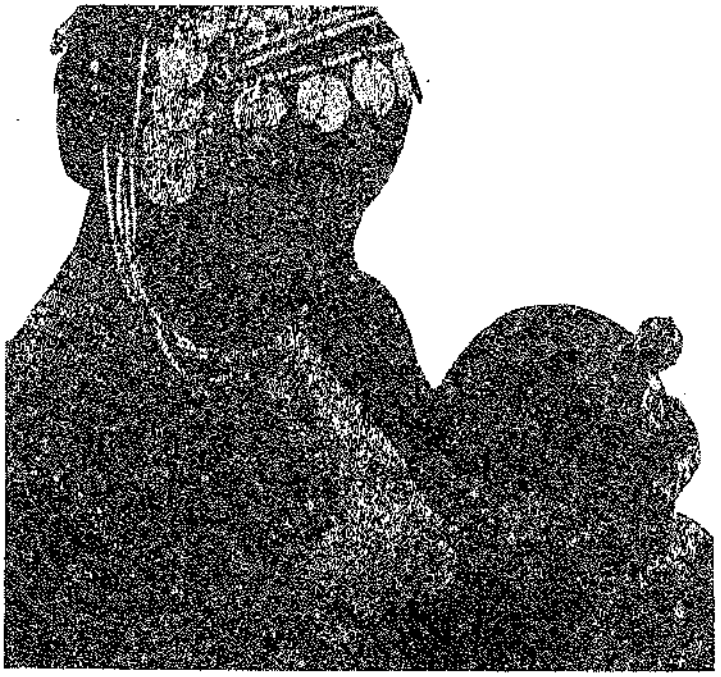
5. Watch the dollars roll in.

It all sounds like some capitalist's wildest fantasy. In fact it's the way Nestles and others have successfully marketed baby milk over the years. The natural, free and healthy food is of course a mother's breast milk.

BOTTLES KILL BABIES

Baby milk has been around for years. Every year one and a half million babies die worldwide because of illnesses contracted through bottle feeding, e.g. from dirty bottles or dirty water mixed with the powder, or malnutrition because the mothers over-dilute the powder.

This makes Nestles and the others responsible for more deaths in the last 20 years than Hitler and Stalin's death camps and gulags put together.



THE PICTURES ON THIS PAGE GRAPHICALLY ILLUSTRATE THE EFFECTS BOTTLE FEEDING CAN HAVE.

In 1974 the charity War on Want blew the whistle. They pointed out in their report that Nestles marketed their milk powder aggressively in poor and Third World countries. They used sales staff dressed as nurses to tour countries, talking about the superiority of Nestles milk and giving away free samples to women and hospitals. That year a group in Switzerland published this report under the title " Nestles Kill Babies". Nestles responded with a law suit which they eventually lost in 1976. In 1977 an international boycott of Nestle products began.

BOYCOTT?

In 1981, after 4 years of the boycott, the World Health Organisation published a Code (known as the WHO Code)

CONTINUED INSIDE BACK COVER.

Subversion

NUMBER 10

Redistribution of wealth in Los Angeles.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE;

FASCISM AND ANTI-FASCISM

AUTO WORKERS IN USA

CLASS STRUGGLE IN MALAWI AND MORE!

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED IN L.A.

DEPT 10, 1 NEWTON ST,
MANCHESTER M1 1HW

CALIFORNIA DREAMING

When Capitalism is confronted by events which rupture the smooth facade of its peaceful order (the peace of slavery) and challenge the grip of its talons on our bodies and on our minds, it responds in a practised manner.

Just as an act of Class rebellion has two parts - both the physical fight itself and the salutary effect which that has on the consciousness of other proletarians - so is the retaliatory strike of our rulers also twofold.

Firstly, it uses physical force against acts of insurrection, whether they be strikes, riots or anything else. And secondly, the class nature of these struggles - these appeals in physical form for solidarity from the rest of the working class - are countered by lies, lies and more lies from the ruling class.

The recent riot in Los Angeles, with its echo in many other U.S. cities, illustrates this well.

RACE RIOTS - CRIME SPREE

First we are told that it was a race riot, blacks attacking whites etc. Then we are shown the acts of "criminals" - racial assaults and looting of stores blending together in the image. And finally we are told it was the revolt of an "underclass" which has been left out of the prosperity enjoyed by "most Americans". Lies, lies and more lies.

What started on the night of Wednesday 29 April was an explosion of class anger such as happens all too rarely. The acquittal of a bunch of racist pigs of a crime which had been recorded for all the world to see was merely the spark for a generalised class action by working class people of all colours. Starting with the attack on the police station and proceeding to the looting of everything from food and other basic necessities to things such as televisions, our class fought back against the system which oppresses it.

Workers everywhere should applaud this resistance.

However, this "carnival of the oppressed" had a goodly share of gatecrashers.

BLOODS, CRIPS AND OTHER SCUM

Riots, whatever their cause, often attract anti-social elements who swarm in like flies to a plate of uncovered food. The two major drug gangs, the Bloods and the Crips, have always been just as much an enemy of working class interests as the Police - their endless bloody conflict has taken vast numbers of lives, both their own members and innocent bystanders.

In the L.A. riot, these murderous gangs declared a truce, so they could devote their energies to participating in the riot. Not, of course, from a working class standpoint, but from an ethnic (anti-white and anti-Korean)

and from a business standpoint - they have put forward a joint programme of reconstruction of their neighbourhoods, involving a partnership between themselves, the state and business interests. If you didn't know already know it, this must convince you that the gangs are just another part of Capitalism - if anything came of these plans, the drug gangs would simply be an extra tier of the state machine. *The participation of these gangs in the riot was the participation of a faction of Capitalism fighting for its own sectional interests.*

What the presence of the gangs shows, together with that of other anti-social elements including a definite racist element (which overlaps with the gang element), both against whites and against Koreans, is this: rather than ONE riot, there were really TWO riots which took place simultaneously - the class riot and the "anti-social riot / pro-capitalist riot" which was parasitical upon it.

ELEMENTARY

A similar confusion, a similar distinction between positive and negative elements exists in many social movements - a typical strike, for instance, will be imbued with Trade Union ideas which merely aim to reform Capitalism. An example is the 1984-85 Miners' Strike. Central to the N.U.M.'s strategy was the "Plan for Coal" which was an alternative way of running Capitalism "in the Miners' interest". This reactionary nonsense existed alongside a genuine class-struggle element.

THE CRUCIAL DISTINCTION

For revolutionaries it is CRUCIAL to differentiate between the class element and the reactionary element in all such cases, despite the capitalist media, both left and right, which will always try to merge the two parts into a single "phenomenon". The presence of counter-revolutionary, pro-capitalist organisations (whether the Bloods, the Crips or the N.U.M.) alongside workers engaged in class struggle, and indeed the presence of confused ideas in the minds of many of the workers involved, must not be allowed to muddy the issue. Revolutionaries take a clear, uncompromising stance - we support ONLY the class element and oppose the reactionary element.

Aside from the attempts of the media to clothe the L.A. class rebellion in the anti-social garb of its "parasite-riot", they also tried the other tack of using the "underclass" theory.

WE'RE ALL MIDDLE CLASS NOW

According to this, the bulk of working class people are not, in fact, working class at all but middle class. Below the middle class is a small, impoverished, chronically unemployed class called the underclass . They it was who were responsible for the riot, so even if it was a class rebellion, the story goes, it has nothing to do with most workers, who are middle class in any case.

This theory is of course reactionary garbage. The working class is a single class united by its position in society of possessing nothing but its ability to work. Some workers may earn more than others but they are still powerless in any real sense - power is exclusively in the hands of the owners of society's wealth, the controllers of the state machine, namely, the capitalist class.

This divisive nonsense about an underclass is peddled not only by the capitalist mainstream but by the Left - this is but one example of the way the Left acts in practise as just another part of Capitalism.

95 MILES FROM L.A.

We said a couple of sentences ago that the working class is powerless. This is true in everyday life, but there is one situation in which workers DO have power - when they engage in class struggle.

A riot is not a revolution. Nor, for that matter, is a strike. We have a long way to go, but the Future develops out of the Present, and great struggles develop out of small ones. The L.A. riot is one of a number of signs of increasing class struggle from around the world in recent months. Let us take heart from it.

I'd be safe and warm if I was in L.A.
California dreaming on such a winter's day

ONE WORLD - ONE CRISIS

During the election, the opposition parties made great play of the claim that the current "recession" is a home grown thing.

The left wing press likes to repeat this message.To read their pages, you would believe that the unemployment and misery in Britain today is all the fault of the Tories in general and Thatcher and now Major in particular. Any look at the real world shows that this is just not true. All over the world capitalism is in crisis. All over the world the threat of recession is becoming a reality. The problem will not simply go away by choosing one lot of "good leaders" to replace the lot in power now.

As things get worse, we are told we must be more productive, that we must accept greater unemployment and cuts in public spending on health, welfare and education. Then we are told things will get better. This line has been spouted by politicians for at least the past twenty years. But could things get better? What is happening in other parts of the worlThe example of the USA is a good one. The USA is the richest nation on Earth. It has the highest rate of productivity. Yet there too, workers are being told to tighten their belts, to make sacrifices in the "national interest", to make cuts today to get "jam tomorrow". The working class in the USA is under a threefold offensive. It is being attacked by a combination of employers, state and unions.

AUTO WORKERS IN THE USA

Auto workers in the USA are at the forefront of the class struggle once again. The automobile industry is facing heavy competition from Japan and other Far Eastern manufacturers. The bosses want to restructure the industry to make it more competitive. They have launched an offensive against auto workers to cut wages and worsen working conditions.

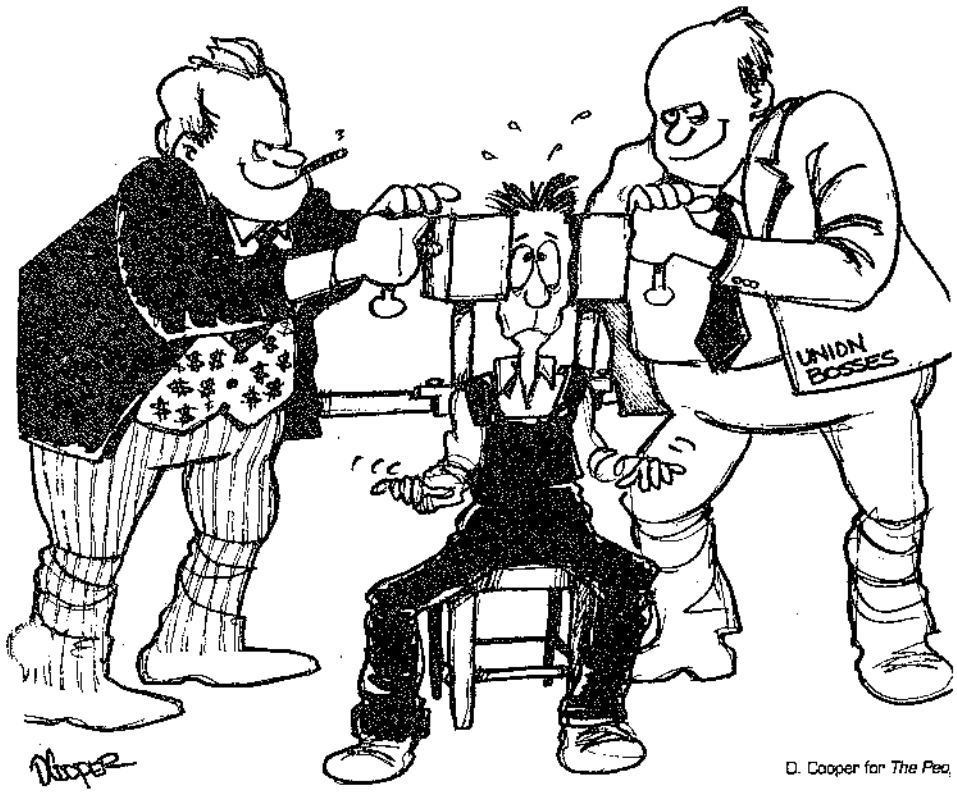
The heavy equipment giant Caterpillar Inc.,was the centre of a long strike, which ended on April 15th.

The strike began last November after Caterpillar demanded wage and benefit cuts which averaged $3.50 an hour. The United Auto Workers (the main car workers union) responded by calling a limited strike at just two factories, with workers at those two plants voting 95% in favour of taking strike action.

Caterpillar retaliated by locking out 5,600 workers at two more plants. The company had hoped that locking them out would turn them against the strikers. When the opposite happened, Caterpillar quickly sent them back to work.

Such was the resentment against the company that this measure caused that the two plants joined the strike and were soon followed by another. By the beginning of April, 12,600 workers were on strike against the company.

All of Caterpillar's UAW workers were on strike by the beginning of April with the exception of 3,400 at two plants where the union had signed no-strike deals. Rather than escalate the action, the UAW preferred to insist that these workers did not join the strike. So the union in fact limited the strike"s effectiveness, allowed Caterpillar to maintain production and weather out the strike. One official of General Motors (one of the 'Big Three' auto producers) was quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* as saying "We're quietly cheering for Caterpillar".



D. Cooper for *The Peo*

The unions, meanwhile acted to limit solidarity. The UAW kept them isolated even from other Caterpillar workers and the Teamsters refused to order their members not to cross picket lines.

On April 1st, Caterpillar announced that it would begin hiring permanent replacements for workers who did not desert the strike and return to work by April 6th.

Despite this threat *and the fact that Caterpillar were inundated with calls from potential scabs,* less than 600 workers returned to work by the company's deadline. The other 13,000 were determined to continue, knowing what a return to work would mean in terms of future working conditions and wages. Meanwhile other groups of workers were beginning to show their solidarity. (See insert)

The UAW's response was to order its members back to work on April 15th. It did this on the basis of an offer made by the company three weeks earlier which strikers had already rejected. The union was making it clear that it had only been in the fight to save duespayers. As soon as the fight risked losing these, it ordered members back to work. As one striking Caterpillar worker said, " The union has saved itself at the expense of the workers."

Meanwhile General Motors have announced that they plan to close 21 plants and axe 74,000 workers by 1995. They also said that they would not announce which plants it was closing until later. They did this in the attempt to start a bidding war where each union branch tries to offer greater concessions - supposedly in an effort to save its members' jobs.

The UAW has done nothing to stop this process. As *Business Week* recently put it, after GM made their announcement, union branches "at underused plants scrambled to offer concessions".

In February the UAW branch in Ypsilanti, Michigan took part in a rally. The purpose of the rally was to try to persuade General Motors to close down its plant in Arlington, Texas, and consolidate production of its large rear-wheel drive cars at the Willow Run plant in Ypsilanti!

This rally was well attended by UAW local officials. Not one word was said in criticism of GM. Not one word was said about the other 71,000 jobs that stood to go in addition to the ones in the Willow Run/Arlington squabble. Not one speaker suggested that the Arlington and Willow Run workers would be better off acting together!

In the event GM announced that Willow Run would be one of the plants to close. According to *Business Week* , "Arlington workers agreed to discuss working three shifts instead of two, while Ypsilanti workers didn't".

Clearly the way forward for workers at Caterpillar , GM and the other auto workers is for them to unite and to fight together. Clearly their fight is the same. Both are fighting the efforts of the auto manufacturers to restructure their companies to screw still more profit out of their workforces. What the union is doing, and it is the same union in both cases, is to isolate workers from each other within the same firm, let alone across the companies. Once again they are showing that their

interests lie hand in glove with those of the employer. They see the fight as already lost and seek to maximise their opportunities to have a role in the new organisation of Caterpillar and GM.

PRODUCTIVITY

This effort at restructuring is taking place in what is already the most efficient capitalist nation in the world.

Between 1972 and 1990 output per hour of labour grew by 18.3 per cent. Yet average real weekly wages (wages adjusted to allow for the effects of inflation), dropped at least 17.6% during the same period. Effectively the bosses have screwed an extra month's wages out of the workers over this period.

During the 1980s the incomes of those getting more than $1 million went up by 2,184%!

Greater productivity does not improve the economic condition for workers generally. All it means is more joblessness, lower wages and increased workplace injuries.

WELFARE CUTS

Faced with its massive budget deficits, the US state has had to try to cut spending. This it has done most effectively in the area of welfare. Last October in Michigan the state, with 437,000 unemployed, *completely eliminated* its general assistance welfare programme. Eighty thousand people were simply cut off from their sole or principal means of support.

In doing this, Michigan became the seventh state to get rid of its welfare payments to single adults. Others were set to follow, while still more have slashed benefits to starvation levels.

The People reports, "And general assistance welfare is hardly the only target. From the federal to the local level, governments are viciously slashing social programmes that the poorest and neediest segments of society depend on for survival. Cuts in programmes for the homeless, hungry children, the disabled, the mentally ill, elderly shut-ins, those without health insurance, and more, are *killing* people - if not from actual starvation, then from the accumulated effects of prolonged malnutrition, exposure to the elements, untreated illnesses and other forms of neglect."

All this in the richest, most powerful country on Earth. The expression goes that when America sneezes, the rest of the world catches a cold. We can only suspect that in the case of Britain it will be a case of double pneumonia.

NOTE: the information for this articles comes from **the People**, published in the USA by the Socialist Labor Party, 914 Industrial Avenue, Palo Alto, 94303, USA.

The following comes from **the People.** We have disagreements with it , but it describes the role of the UAW as scabs very graphically.

UAW Traitors

Rank-and-file auto workers attempting to organize a collection for striking Caterpillar workers while the strike was still on found their efforts blocked—and Caterpillar had nothing to do with it.

Rank-and-file members of UAW Local 110 in St. Louis, after trying for three months to get the local's officers to establish a food and money collection for the support of the striking Caterpillar workers, finally formed an ad hoc group to organize the effort.

Local and international bureaucrats, apparently concerned that the group was connected with the New Directions Movement, a caucus within the union seeking to oust the UAW's current administration, had collection tubs removed from factory gates, and had Chrysler tell one worker to stop collecting or face suspension. When he continued, Chrysler called police. International officials drafted a letter for the Caterpillar bargaining committee to sign, asking that "any support we receive should come through official UAW channels."

As it turns out, the ad hoc group wasn't even connected with New Directions, so the bureaucrats' scorning of solidarity with the Caterpillar workers stands revealed as not only treasonous but inept. Despite the threats and harassment, the ad hoc group succeeded in delivering $1,900 and a pickup load of food to two Caterpillar locals.

THE MENACE OF ANTI-FASCISM

Going Fishing

The low level of workplace struggle in Britain over the last few years left the anti-poll tax movement as one of the few fishing grounds open to left wing groups. With the partial success of that movement and consequent decline in organised opposition to the Poll Tax, left groups have been cast adrift looking for new pools from which to recruit. It has proved a difficult search.

Anti-apartheid doesn't provide good campaign material sine the ANC started playing footsie with the National Party. Other foreign adventures were considered a bit risky since 'liberation' movements generally began falling over themselves to court western politicians and bankers. A few esoteric groups have chanced their arm at reviving interest in support for Fidel Castro's Cuban dictatorship, but it isn't much of a crowd puller these days.

The general election campaign provided a brief respite from the left's desperate search, but now that is out of the way, the problem has returned.

In the absence of any new and exciting campaign material the left have fallen back on to some of their old tried and trusted formulae for conning workers into supporting them.

Last Time Round

The left played a significant part in the 30s and 40s in rallying support for "democratic" CAPITALISM against the forces of fascist CAPITALISM in Europe. 'Communist' parties and even trotskyists gained themselves considerable credibility by attaching themselves to the coattails of various western governments whom they had previously dismissed as vile enemies of the working class. Even anarchists on the fringe of left politics came out of the cold and fell into line by supporting Republican capitalism in Spain against Franco's fascists.

"Play It Again Sam"

So today, thinks the left, if we shout loud enough about the new fascist menace in Europe and hark back to the horrors of World War Two, perhaps we can create a new 'anti-fascist' movement and round up all those footloose labourites and liberals reeling from another Tory election victory.

So that's exactly what they have done. Time energy and money have been diverted into various organisations and activities previously quite low on their list of priorities. Unfortunately for them, not only is it difficult persuading most workers that there really is a fascist menace, but competition for the footloose is so intense amongst these lefties that each has decided to set up their very own 'anti-fascist' or 'anti-racist' front. Incidentally this sectarian promotion of different groups, all supposedly fighting the same enemy, is in flat contradiction to the trotskyists oft repeated, if false theory, that fascism in the thirties made such headway only through the failure of all the left groups to create a genuine 'united front'

Disunited Fronts

To our knowledge there are <u>at least</u> five ostensibly national anti-fascist/anti-racist fronts

in Britain alongside dozens of other local alliances. Of the national groups some are straightforward extensions of one particular group. Militants **Youth against Racism** and the SWP's **Anti-Nazi league** are examples of these. There's the moderate **Anti-Racist Alliance** made up of Labourites and their hangers on. Smaller political groups like *Red Action* and the anarchist *DAM* have clubbed together in the more radical sounding **Anti Fascist Action**. The participants in AFA have made a virtue out of necessity, by proclaiming non-sectarian principles against the 'opportunism' of the likes of Militant and the SWP.

Them and Us

Well, you might say, this is just sour grapes on the part of an even smaller group like **Subversion**, who couldn't extend themselves to setting up their very own anti-fascist front in competition with the others or haven't the stomach for in-fighting in AFA. But **Subversion** is not in the business of trying to manufacture opposition in the absence of genuine working class struggle. Neither are we interested in recruiting on the basis of single issue politics.

Some Important Questions

Then again you might think we're being a bit unfair on the lefties motives or political reasoning. After all, even if it is accepted that the left's claims are a bit overblown, surely it's still true that for some workers even a tiny group of self-proclaimed fascists or their supporters can make life a misery? And isn't it true that the fascists on the continent are much stronger than here - shouldn't we be working together to stop that happening here?

And the Answers

Well, on the first point we agree that, for instance, if some bunch of fascist thugs is harassing black workers then they deserve a good beating and we should support those workers organising themselves to sort the fascists out, in whatever way we can. Such groups of self-organised workers should, wherever necessary, link up over as wide a geographical area as practicable. Of course in any physical confrontation with fascists in this type of situation we don't stop to ask if the individual next to us is a member of the SWP or Red Action, but this shouldn't stop us from questioning the politics of such groups.

Historical Roots

On the second point, it is true that self-proclaimed fascist groups are stronger in some other European countries and that alongside these groups are much larger and more influential extreme right-wing organisations like the *National Front* in France which the working class needs to oppose.

Here we come to the 'heart of the matter', politically speaking. It is essential that we understand the emotive and non-historical use which the left makes of the term *fascist*. Fascism (or Nazism, and there were some important differences between the Italian and German variants of what is commonly described as Fascism in popular usage) was a very particular combination of nationalism, racism and state corporatism which the ruling class supported in Germany and Italy in a specific historical situation.

Other combinations of the same elements were found to be more useful elsewhere - Stalinism in Russia and Eastern Europe for instance. Yet stalinism was aligned with the so-called forces of 'democracy" against fascism! Furthermore, we would argue that it was 'democracy' and the democratic parties of capitalism in Germany who effectively paved the way for the rise of the Nazis to power, in particular through their political and physical attacks on the working class rebellion in central Europe between 1917 and 1920.

Democracy and Dictatorship

Capitalism as a system is neither naturally 'democratic' nor 'totalitarian' in its political forms. Whatever the political form, it is however, always a dictatorship of the capitalist class over the working class. The nation states of capitalism will at different times pass through a whole range of right wing 'democracies' and 'dictatorships' and left wing 'democracies' and 'dictatorships'. The

particular political form will depend on the perceived needs of the national ruling class to deal with their competitors abroad and their enemy at home- the working class. It is also at least arguable, that political 'democracies' have perpetuated as much violence against the world's workers - through wars, starvation, enforced poverty, ecological disasters, industrial 'accidents', civil repression, etc. - as have political 'dictatorships'.

Let us not forget such current or recent examples as the Gulf War, Serbia's 'ethnic cleansing', famine in Africa, Shoot to Kill and Bloody Sunday in Ireland, the Chernobyl and Bhopal disasters, to name just a few.

Back Home Again

So returning to Britain today, we can see that there is a huge difference between sorting out a bunch of local fascist thugs and building up a whole campaign focussed on some supposed national or international fascist threat.

The real enemy of all workers, black or white, at the present time are the everyday institutions of capitalism and the people who run them - the courts, police, jails, immigration office; the established political parties of capitalism, Labour, Tory, Liberal, SNP etc.; the media and the churches; AND right in the heart of the working class, the unions and the bureaucracy which runs them.

The State of Things Today

It's the state which enforces a rigorous policy of racism throughout society, especially in times of recession. (It's the Tories with the tacit support of Labour who have introduced the racist Asylum Bill not the fascists.)

It's the state through its police and army which tries to break our strikes and occupations.

It's the established political parties which seek (able assisted by the left) to channel our discontent into harmless parliamentary pursuits and dependence on leaders. It's the media which reinforces racist and anti-working class values. It's the churches that divide workers and preach subservience to the system "on earth as in heaven". It's the unions who divide workers and divert our energies.

Left Fronts

Yet the left in their "Broad" fronts and alliances say 'fear the fascist menace vote Labour!' Instead of fighting the sham of capitalist democracy they either openly or covertly encourage participation in the system 'in order to keep the right wing and the fascists out' or just to minimise the fascist vote. This despite the fact that it is often workers' confused rejection of capitalist democracy which tempts them to support the fascists.

The Anti Racist Alliance seems to be made up of assorted left wing Labour Party types and various Black 'community leaders', all loyally working within the system, promoting reforms and offering advice to those in power. The last Manchester meeting we attended had as its honoured guest speaker a black community policeman from the USA, who was particularly strong on the benefits of working within the system.

Even the AFA, which many consider the best of a bad bunch for its members willingness to 'get stuck in' still trawls the polluted waters of the trade union bureaucracy for support and produces election leaflets with propaganda aimed only against tiny local fascist groups.

Right Wing Resurgence

That nasty fascist and extreme right wing groups are able to make any headway amongst workers today is a reflection of the depth of the economic crisis, the visibly worn out policies of the established parties of capitalism (including the so-called 'socialist' parties) to deal with it, and the disunity and demoralisation of the working class following the defeat of a wave of strikes and other struggles in the seventies and eighties.

Class Struggle

The reemergence of working class struggle and the increased unity and self-confidence across racial and other barriers which comes with it, cannot be artificially manufactured by small political groups through the medium of

campaign style politics.

Struggle will re-emerge. It always does. There are already at least some small signs of this which the media prefers to hide news of beneath a barrage of false debate over capitalist issues and the latest demoralising news of massacres in Yugoslavia etc. To have any chance of success, the struggle as it reemerges needs to know its enemies and not be diverted into capitalist battles between left and right, democratic or dictatorial, black or white etc.. We will not assist this process by promoting cross class alliances under the banner of anti-fascism

Fascism and Anti-Fascism by J Barrot. A classic critique of anti-fascism in the 30s and 40s. Available from **SUBVERSION,** price £1.50 inc postage and package. Expands on a number of the points in this article.

Malawi Workers Fight Back

During May there was an unprecedented wave of massive strikes and demonstrations in Malawi against poverty wages and conditions, little different in many workplaces from colonial times.

Tea and tobacco plantation workers were at the centre of the strike movement which spread to railway, sugar, clothing workers and others.

As far as we can tell this was an independent movement of the working class unmediated by capitalist opposition groups, although exiled Labour and 'pro-democracy' leaders were quick to try and capture the situation.

Police were used to disperse demonstrations and riots but the size and force of the movement caused Banda, the authoritarian head of state in Malawi, to try and open a dialogue and at least talk the lamguage of concession.

Given the dire economic situation in Malawi it remains to be seen how far any concessions will go.

Green Racists

The following text comes from the journal CARF. We have serious disagreements with the politics of this journal, but believe our readers will find this very interesting.

The Greens, who used to be the only West German party in the 1980s whose programme included 'the right for every refugee to stay in Germany' and who were part of the struggles against deportations, voted at their 1991 party conference to give up their former policy. They claim that the increasing conflicts between the German population and more and more foreigners coming to live in Germany show the need for 'new' political solutions. Instead of using their resources to support the anti-racist movement, the Greens promote a reactionary immigration law – with quotas to be set by the state according to the needs of private capital for cheap labour – as a progressive step towards a peaceful multi-cultural German society.

A new consensus

A large number of trade unionists go along with the idea. The new political consensus between the ruling conservative party and the liberals, the opposition social democrats and the Greens is that something must be done about the burden of an increasing number of asylum-seekers.

While some Green politicians still oppose a constitutional change, Bjorn Engholm, the social democrat candidate who might replace Chancellor Kohl after the 1994 general elections, made the policy of his party quite clear. In interviews, he has admitted openly that he will not defend the German asylum law if a European-wide solution can be achieved. That there is nothing left of a liberal asylum law anyway – since the leading parties decided in January on a new bill that includes collection camps, cutting the decision-making process to six weeks and restricting appeal rights – is no longer a matter for political debate. Nor is the racist aliens' law that defines German citizenship by blood relations and withholds the most basic democratic rights from millions of people born in Germany.

Bookchin and Green Anarchism

Veteran American anarchist, Murray Bookchin, visited England in May on a brief four-date lecture tour. His talk on "Social Ecology" in Leeds was attended by a packed audience of 3-400 - testimony both to Bacon lasting popularity among those who first came across him through books such as Post-Scarcity Anarchism (1971) and The Limits of the City (1974), as well as to the enduring resonance of his ideas for a younger generation who he has reached in the very different climate (in more ways than one!) of the 1990s.

A concern with the environmental consequences of capitalism's insatiable lust for profit has always been a central theme of Bacon involvement as a writer and activist in the anarchist movement since he joined it in the 1950s. If he appears now as a pioneer of currently fashionable Green politics, it is because capitalism itself has already fulfilled and surpassed even the most distant warnings sounded by Bookchin in articles and books, such as Out Synthetic Environment (1962), written thirty or more years ago.

Bookchin terms the brand of green anarchism he has developed over the years "social ecology". His point of departure is not 'nature' or 'the planet' but human society. Destructive exploitation of the environment is the outcome of a similar relationship between people. So, "The only way to resolve the ecological crisis is to end the domination of human by human. A precondition for living in harmony with each other" (from an interview in Leeds Northern Star 14.5.92.)

Bookchin likens the capitalist system to a vehicle accelerating towards ecological catastrophe. This vehicle is powered by a "grow or die" imperative, in which the profit motive takes precedence over all other considerations. It is no use appealing to bosses or politicians to change direction; they are not driving the vehicle, it is driving them. By all means engage in single-issue campaigns, Bookchin says, but be under no illusions that these can do anything more than apply slight pressure on the brake; what is really needed is to remove the engine.

Where we part company with Bookchin is not over his basically revolutionary analysis of the problem but with regard to the gradualist strategy he proposes as its solution. Bookchin advocates "libertarian municipalise", the steady building up of political and economic power by communities at a local level within capitalism.

This approach appears to stem from a rejection of the conflict between Capital and Labour as the crucial relationship which determines the nature of present-day society, and from a dismissal of the working class's potential as the only force capable of bringing about a fundamental transformation of society.

In America the strategy of "libertarian municipalism" is prompted by the "Left Green Network", a grouping strongly influenced by Bacon theories. But from what we have seen of the Left Green Network's ideas, it is far from being a revolutionary organisation. Alongside its "long-term goals", the Left Green Network's programme also contains a large number of "immediate demands", which consist of a mixture of worn-out policies peddled by traditional left-wing parties and measures which could quite comfortably be adopted by capitalism without bringing about any real change in the system.

By seeking to attract support on the basis of such a programme the Left Green Network is less likely to achieve its aim of creating "a force which can challenge the destruction of our humanity" than it is to end up channelling discontent with capitalism towards the cause of a slightly more 'eco-friendly' version of the same old system.

* A more detailed 'Introduction To The US Green Anarchists" can be found in the April-June issue of **Organise!,** magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

Several basic texts of the Left Green Network have been published and debated in recent issues of the **Discussion Bulletin**, PO Box 1564, Grand Rapids, Mi 49501, USA.

NEW PAMPHLETS COMING SOON FROM SUBVERSION.

Nationalism and Imperialism in Ireland - the myths exploded

Labouring in Vain - why Labour has never been a working class party.

What We Stand For

We meet regularly for political discussion and to organise our activities. The following is a brief description of our basic political principles:

- We are against all forms of capitalism; private, state and self-managed.

- We are for communism, which is a classless society in which all goods are distributed according to needs and desires.

- We are actively opposed to all ideologies which divide the working class, such as religion, sexism and racism.

- We are against all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" movements such as the IRA.

- The working class (wage labourers, the unemployed, housewives, etc.), is the revolutionary class; only its struggle can liberate humanity from scarcity, war and economic crisis.

- Trade unions are part of the capitalist system, selling our labour power to the bosses and sabotaging our struggles. We support independent working class struggle, in all areas of life under capitalism, outside the control of the trade unions and all political parties.

- We totally oppose all capitalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. We are against participation in fronts with these organisations.

- We are against participation in parliamentary elections; we are for the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class and the establishment of organisations of working class power.

- We are against sectarianism, and support principled co-operation among revolutionaries.

- We exist to actively participate in escalating the class war towards communism.

Want to Get Involved?

If you agree with our basic principles "What We Stand For" and are in general agreement with the views expressed in articles in this and other issues of **SUBVERSION**, then why not get involved?

There are a number of ways you could do this.

1. Join **SUBVERSION**. You can do this if you are in agreement and live in the north of England. We have members in Manchester, Leeds and Oldham.

2. Write to us and let us know you are out there!

3. Take extra copies of **Subversion** to give to friends or distribute at meetings (be realistic, though not pessimistic, about the number you might be able to pass on).

4. Try writing short articles for future issues. We will happily give you advice on what the right length is, and will make suggestions about topics if you want.

5. Send us some money! Cheques and POs payable to **SUBVERSION**.

6. Arrange to meet us.

7. If meeting us is difficult, you might like to have a local contact address published in **SUBVERSION** and use this to find out if there are others locally of a like mind.

Write to: ***SUBVERSION, Dept 10, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW.***

Subversion

We need .....

NUMBER 11

A Winter of Anger

The state's plans to close over half the mining industry, to sack thousands of miners, to jeopardize thousands of other jobs was not just bad judgment. It was a sign of just how desperate the state of the British economy is and of how determined the state is that we, the working class, should pay and not the bosses.

The plans for the mines did not just come from nowhere, nor did they come because the Tories are uniquely wicked. The redundancy threats came close on the heels of Black Wednesday, the collapse of the pound and Britain's withdrawal from the ERM. The government said it would have to cut public spending and closing the mines was just a first step.

continued on page 6

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

WAR IN YUGOSLAVIA

MILITANT

DISUNITY OVER EUROPE

ANARCHISM AND THE LEFT

LEFT GREENS

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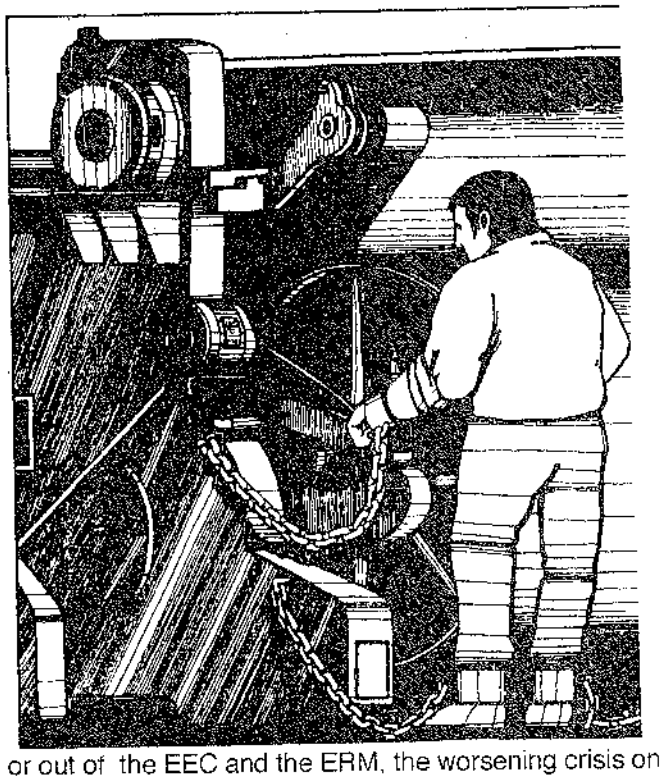
Meetings

We hold regular meetings in the Manchester area. If you'd like to come, write to our address for details, or look out in Frontline Bookshop.

We also take part in open discussion meetings in Sheffield. These are organised jointly with members of the CWO, CBG, ACF and local anarchists. If you'd like to come along, drop us a line.

Subversion is printed and published by Subversion, Dept 10, 1 Newton St, Manchester M1 1HW.

Disunity over European Unity



Despite the huge costs of reunification and the general slow down in world trade, Germany remains the strongest economy relative to others in Europe. It is also, alongside Japan, a major competitor of the USA for dominance of the world market.

For the other countries of Europe this is a major problem. Inside or outside the EEC and its exchange rate mechanism, Germany's economic strength is something they have to deal with. The attitude of European states to the EEC is very much their attitude to Germany.

The ruling classes of places like Belgium have already more-or-less thrown in their lot with Germany on the basis of 'if you can't beat them, join them'.

Other states, like France and Italy, have decided that Germany's strength is best contained within a strong integrated union where they can exert their political influence and ensure some redistribution of wealth to weaker sections of the European economy.

Germany itself recognises that to compete with the emerging USA dominated bloc, incorporating Canada and Mexico, it must expand its immediate productive and market base in Europe, as rapidly as possible.

Britain on the other hand has always prevaricated over its policy towards European Union. Its long standing ties with the USA and substantial investments in that country have ensured this. That section of the British ruling class in favour of European Union has, since Thatcher's fall, had the upper hand. The USA supported this move on the understanding that Britain would act as its bridgehead into Europe. Britain would work on the inside to promote a looser and wider union integrated into a US dominated NATO and based on free trade with the North American bloc.

The rapid acceleration of the world economic crisis and the disintegration of countries like Yugoslavia on the immediate periphery of Europe has brought all these differences to a head. It has especially reopened splits in the British ruling class over European policy.

As usual the political parties of capitalism from the left to right and the whole of the media have tried to engage our participation in the debate over all these issues, pretending that it is our interests at stake rather than theirs. But clearly, in or out of the EEC and the ERM, the worsening crisis only brings more attacks on the social condition of the working class. It is in the weakest economies that this attack is at its most vicious. Massive public expenditure cuts in Italy alongside the abandonment of protective wage agreements are the order of the day irrespective of whether Italy is in or out of the ERM.

Workers there, far from being diverted by the EEC debates, have responded in their hundreds of thousands with massive strikes and demonstrations. And the union leaders who have cooperated with the government all along have come under verbal and physical assault. The first faltering steps of self-organisation outside the Unions have been taken through the formation of "Committees of Struggle' and other base committees which cut across trade union and sectional barriers. Whilst these have yet to go beyond a 'militant trade unionism' in their political approach (with the danger of becoming simply alternative unions) there is great potential for a genuinely independent class based movement to grow.

There have also been large strikes in Greece and Spain. We can only hope and work towards the same response now in Britain, where the recent outrage at massive redundancies in the mines and elsewhere shows that workers here are reaching similar conclusions to those parts of Europe.

{For more background reading we would recommend the article 'EMUs in the Class War" in "Aufheben, c/o Unemployed Centre, Prior House, Tilbury Place, Brighton, East Sussex.}

Yugoslavia
- a good old fashioned bosses war

On the face of it, Yugoslavia looks like yet another of those many 'trouble spots' around the world where age old antagonisms of nationality and religion have intertwined to produce a conflict which seems to defy resolution.

To better understand what's really going on there, we have to ask why this situation has erupted so bloodily at this particular moment.

North and South

The federal state of Yugoslavia which emerged at the end of the Second World War under so-called 'communist' control encompassed several regions which had reached various stages of capitalist development. The most advanced of these were the north-western republics of Slovenia and Croatia.

In the interests of strengthening the Yugoslav state as a whole, a large proportion of the surplus value (profits) produced by the Slovenian and Croatian working class was constantly creamed off by the state capitalist bureaucrats in charge of the central government for investment in the less developed southern republics - Bosnia, Montenegro, Serbia and Macedonia.

This policy provided the material basis for continual tensions among the factions comprising the Yugoslav ruling class: as one excellent account of the background to the war in Yugoslavia puts it, "between on the one hand rulers who stressed a degree of Croat and Slovene independence along with economic efficiency, and on the other hand those who were concerned with the preservation of the machinery of centrally directed investment, the all-round development of the national capital, and the preeminence of Belgrade and the largely Serb administrative apparatus."[1]

Economic Crisis

The economic and social policies in Yugoslavia at any particular time tended to reflect the interests of whichever one or other of these ruling class factions held the upper hand. By the 1980s, however, as the Yugoslav economy became gripped ever tighter by the crisis affecting the whole of world capitalism, the scope for reconciling these two contradictory tendencies each pulling in opposite directions was steadily eroded.

The more the local ruling classes of the richer republics pinned their hopes of surviving the crisis on ridding themselves of the economic burden posed by the less prosperous rest of the country, the more the federal authorities strove to safeguard their own futures by recentralising the whole state under their own control. At the same time, another faction within the Serbian ruling class, judging that the Yugoslav federation could not possibly be held together, began to whip up Serbian nationalism in preparation for an anticipated war against of each against all.

The inevitable outcome was the declaration of independence by Slovenia, Croatia and later Bosnia, the invasion of large swathes of these republics by the federal army, and the outbreak of hostilities by the various 'irregular' forces each fighting on behalf of their own particular nationalism.

Class Struggle and Nationalism.

Not the least pressing aspect of the economic crisis affecting the various factions of the Yugoslav ruling class during the late 1980s was the militancy of the working class in Yugoslavia. From 986 through to 1990, faced with rising unemployment and triple-figure inflation, workers in Yugoslavia launched repeated strikes aimed at defending their living standards against wage freezes and wage cuts. These strikes involved hundreds of thousands of workers and took place right across the whole of Yugoslavia, regardless of republican boundaries.

Now it seems that this struggle of class against class has been almost totally submerged in the war of nation against nation, religion against religion. The current war in Yugoslavia is taking place because the ruling class's strategy for 'solving' the crisis has triumphed over the working class's own independent response. Nationalism - the idea that workers can find way out of their problems by rallying behind 'their own' bosses in opposition to other workers - remains a depressingly powerful force which time and again blocks the path of working class progress.

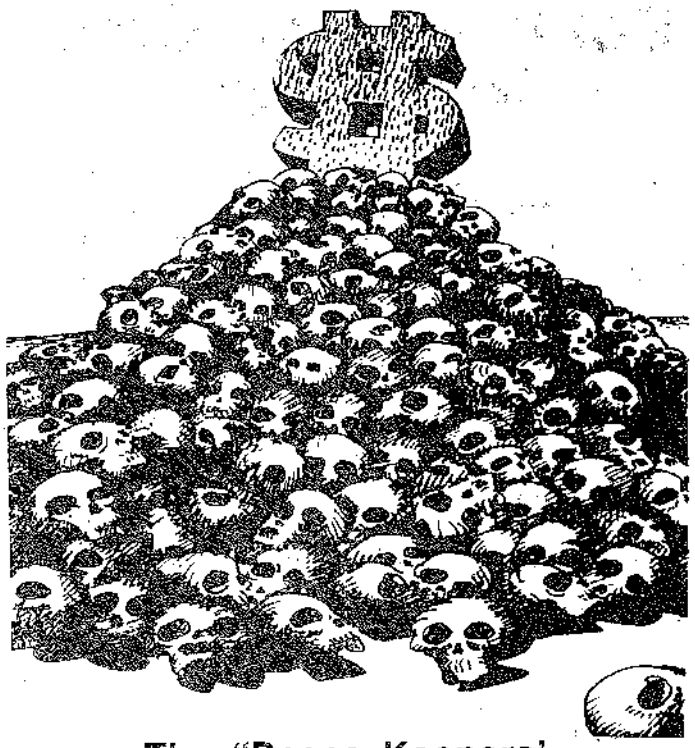
Imperialist Vultures

Since 1945 more than 20 million people have been killed in over 100 wars around the world. Most of these conflicts have been war-by-proxy between rival superpowers on 'third world' battlefields. Now these 'little wars' are moving closer to the heartlands of world capitalism.

Yugoslavia borders on seven other states, each of which in its own way is eyeing up its neighbour's

[1] see "Yugoslavia: Capitalism and Class Struggle 1918-67" in the pamphlet Yugoslavery from BM Blob, London WC1N 3XX

decaying corpse for whatever pickings it might grab. Also circling over the scene are two larger vultures: Germany, which rushed some of its EC partners into early recognition of Slovenian and Croatian 'independence' with the aim of eventually pulling these states into a German-dominated European bloc; and the USA, which initially declared against any dismemberment of the Yugoslav federation and is seeking some way of thwarting the growing expansionist ambitions of its rising European rival.



The "Peace Keepers'

Only someone with a heart of stone could fail to be shocked by the atrocities being committed - on all sides - in Yugoslavia. But this is no reason for anyone to support the 'peace initiative' of the United Nations or European Community. These bodies are not intervening in Yugoslavia out of humanitarian fellow-feeling, but as part of the self-interested manoeuvring of the big powers which dominate them.

In flat contradiction of its stated aims of disarming Serb forces and enabling refugees to return home, so far the objective result of the UN 'peace-keeping' force's intervention has in fact been to consolidate Serbian conquests.

In the Serbian-occupied Baranja region of north east Croatia, for example, UN troops "are increasingly assisting in the policy of 'ethnic cleansing' ...Hundreds of Croats and Hungarians are assisted in their passage out of Baranja by the UN" (Independent on Sunday 27.9.92). At the same time, UN officials "vowed to use force" to stop Croatian refugees returning to their former homes in the same region. (Independent 30.9.92).

At the time of writing (early October) such actions by the UN were raising the strong possibility of armed confrontation between UN and Croatian forces. All of this fits in with the UN's role as a tool of US capitalism's strategic objectives in Yugoslavia.

Whatever 'peace' settlement is eventually imposed on Yugoslavia will do nothing to remove the underlying causes of the conflict. It will merely ratify a realignment of the forces which are jostling for the strongest position from which to fight the next war, and the next war after that. The most we can do to aid our fellow workers in Yugoslavia is to expose and oppose the capitalist forces big and small which are responsible for the bloodshed and misery there, and to hope that eventually out of the gruesome futility of the present conflict the Yugoslav working class's spirit of class combativity might yet be resurrected.

pamphlets

Ireland. ***Nationalism and Imperialism. The Myths Exploded.*** Why the British State and the IRA both defend capitalism. 50p inc. postage.

Labouring In Vain. A socialist analysis of the Labour party from its formation to today. ***Out soon.*** 50p inc. postage.

Left-Wing Communism in Britain 1917-21 ... An infantile disorder? By Bob Jones, Pirate Press. 60p inc postage.

Fascism and Anti-Fascism by J Barrot, Pirate Press. £1.50 inc postage.

Back issues. Some copies of Subversion 9 and 10 left. Send a donation and 24p stamp.

All cheques payable to Subversion.

Subversion
Dept 10, 1 Newton St., Manchester M1 1HW

A Winter of Anger continued

It was followed by threats to many famous London hospitals and the announcement of a plan to tax invalidity benefit. It comes at a time of a continuing running down of the NHS which shows itself in closures or threats to close less famous hospitals like Elizabeth Garret Anderson, the women's hospital in London, or Booth Hall, the children's hospital in Manchester. It accompanied threats to freeze or squeeze public sector pay.

Against this background the massive anger and demonstrations were essential if there is going to be any fight back by the working class.

But the working class is up against a united front of the ruling class. The Labour Party, the Liberal Party, large numbers of Tory MPs, the Press, Radio, TV, Church, TUC, UDM and NUM were united in opposing the closures. But their opposition was not the same as ours. It was an opposition calling for a national energy policy, a policy which would look at all the energy production in Britain and make cuts and redundancies across the board, not just in one sector. A policy which might "save" a few jobs in Britain but which would happily lead to many redundancies for workers in other countries.

So far this coalition has led the opposition. What has been the result? Ten pits have closed, thousands of miners stand to lose their jobs in a few months time rather than immediately. The management of British Coal are making it plain that they intend to go ahead with as many closures as they can get away with. Thousands of other workers will still lose their jobs and whole working class communities will be destroyed or thrown into total despair.

What the working class needs to do is to take back control of the fight. This means organising independently of the unions, independently of the Labour and Liberal Parties. It means a fight against cuts in jobs, pay and services wherever they happen. It is not a question of arguing about which jobs should go, but of making sure the ruling class pays, not us. It means a united fight where we recognise that an injury to one is an injury to all. Not a fight based on demos and petitions, but a unified strike movement where everyone is actively involved in running the strike.

"ER — HEEL?"

letters

Bookchin and Green Anarchism

Readers of the article on 'Bookchin and Green Anarchism" in **subversion 10** may have noticed that due to a technical error Murray Bookchin's name appeared several times as Murray Bacon. We apologise for any confusion this may have caused!

On a more serious note, we have received the following letter (edited for reasons of space) from one of the co-editors, with Bookchin, of the Social Ecology Project publication **Green Perspectives.** We are publishing this because we feel that they have a right to comment in their own words, but regret that they have not chosen to write it in an easily accessible style.

To the Editors:

....Your account of Bookchin's ideas in 'Bookchin and Green Anarchism' ... [suggests] that he is ultimately a reformist by associating him with reormist tendencies in the Left Green Network (an organisation which Bookchin co-founded) and some of whose members support his views.

....It is understandable that, an ocean away, you would not be aware of internal dissensions in the Left Green Network. Be apprised here that (1) the LGN has passed no 'program' - what your writer must be referring to is one of several draft programs that have been floating around for some time no;w: and (2) despite the somewhat diluted assertions of libertarian municipalism in the LGN's Principles, liberttarian municipalism is only one of many tendencies in the LGN, which encompasses not only social ecologists but eco-socialists, social democrats, anarchosyndicalists, and anarchists of a postmofernist bent.

Bookchin has consistently fought the very reformist tendencies in the LGN that you associate with him -- indeed, a considerable literature makes the same criticism that you do. In 'Critique of the Draft Program of the Left Green Network" (June 1991), for example, Bookchin and I criticized in detail just such reformist tendencies in one of the draft LGN programs and concluded by asserting that "the Left Greens should be uncompromising in their spirit of opposition .... We know of no other way to countervail the cooptive powers of capitalism but to oppose to it the most

demanding ecological positions in our movement." Subversion readers who wish to see a copy of this critique and our other antireformist writings may write to the Social Ecology Project, P.O. Box 111, Burlington, Vermont 05402, USA.

Finally, far from advocating a 'steady building up ... within capitalism,' Bookchin places himself in the great anarchist tradition of the "Commune of communes." His libertarian municipalism seeks to develop a civic communal opposition to the nation-state and the capitalist system be means of the 'counterpower' of a new confederal politics (in the Hellenic sense of the word politics) and a municipalized confederal economy. Not to see that this counterpower would emerge as a 'dual power' is a mistake that many of our opponents in various Green movements typically make.

Janet Biehl

Subversion comments: the first point to make is that Bookchin's strategy (as expressed in the final paragraph above) misses out the class struggle and appears to consist merely of abstract organisational forms, talking about 'civic communal opposition' and the 'counterpower of a new confederal politics' and the like. What exactly is being organised?

For Subversion, the class struggle is the only motor of revolutionary change. When we talk about forms of organisation, we are talking about how to organise class struggle and secondly about the organisation of a new revolutionary society, since the second will arise out of the first. A revolutionary classless society can only arise out of class struggle.

The second point concerns the people Bookchin is organised with. There is a saying that you shouldn't judge a person by the company they keep - but how can we be criticised for associating Bookchin with reformist tendencies in the Left Green Network (LGN) when he himself has chosen to share an organisation with such people?

Among the several excellent points made in the Social Ecology Project's "Critique" of the LGN is that the LGN's "Draft Program" contains many demands for reforms "that are quite compatible in principle with the capitalist system and that are partly in existence already."

From this we would conclude that so-called "reformists" are not a 'backward' section of the revolutionary movement, but in fact belong to the 'progressive' end of the capitalist spectrum.

Revolutionaries have no common cause with such "reformist" (i.e. left-wing capitalist) groups. On the contrary, we must sharply distinguish ourselves from them not only politically but also organisationally. Only in this way can we keep our message unmistakably clear in the eyes of the people we are trying to reach.

Subversion

Anarchism and the left

Dear Comrades,

Your article, "The Menace of Anti-Fascism" is to be welcomed, even if you do beat about the bush a bit before you actually come to the point.

Of course it's very important to stress that the enemies of our class struggle are the politicians and political parties left and right - that while their ideas and appearances may appear different, the ANL, AFA and the BNP are united in their support for capital and the state against the working class.

So why do you involve yourselves with leftist parties like the Anarchist "Communist" Federation , and Class War who promote Anti-Fascist Action (firmly defending the trade unions, elections and all the other "rights" we workers have in a capitalist democracy).

From reading your magazine it would appear that you know who the left are, and what they are (i.e. an integral and essential part of the capitalist system) but are you just the radical left of it?

I'd like to see **Subversion** clarify their position on Leftism (Anarchism included) and assert their opposition to it.

Against all states and all states in waiting.

S. Leamington Spa.

Subversion replies:

Dear Comrade,

The position of Subversion on leftism is quite clear. The left is simply a part of capitalism, no less than the right. Left and right are twin pillars of capitalism's political apparatus.

The politics of leftism can be summed-up as an updated form of the old bourgeois-democratic programme (mainly based on "right" - the right to work, right of nations to self-determination, liberty, equality, fraternity, etc.) coupled with a state capitalist economic programme. Different groups or currents may vary the menu here and there but form part of the same "cuisine".

This is true of ALL varieties of leftism, from the Labourites and Stalinists to the most radical-talking of the Trotskyists and Maoists. ALL of these currents are just different options WITHIN capitalism.

It is because of this fundamental rift between revolutionary politics and leftist politics that revolutionaries never describe themselves as "left" or "left-wing". Some revolutionaries describe themselves as "ultra left", i.e.

beyond the left.

However, this doesn't necessarily mean that supporters of left wing politics or members of left wing groups are consciously acting in the interests of capitalism. All of us are brought up in an environment where we are constantly bathed in capitalist ideas all of our lives, and when we begin to break from the mainstream ideas of this society, we inevitably break from it a bit at a time. This is why people who want to oppose capitalism often gravitate to one or other form of leftism, at least to begin with.

Capitalism then has many faces. If the face of mainstream society has begun to look ugly to someone, they will be presented with another face. If the right has no charms, the left will smile seductively.

Thus the value of the left for capitalism is that it is a safety net to catch people who would otherwise turn to revolutionary politics. The leftist groups and parties are OBJECTIVELY capitalist because, despite the best intentions of people who have been thus "caught", their energies will be spent on struggling for an alternative WITHIN capitalism. Part of the activity of revolutionary groups, therefore, will involve trying to win supporters of leftism to revolutionary politics.

This is a brief summary of our view on leftism. As for the specifics of leftism, e.g. support for trade unionism, support for "national liberation" etc. and why we say they are counter-revolutionary, we have dealt with these in other articles in the past and will deal with them in other articles in the future, so we will now deal with the more specific part of you letter, i.e. our attitude to the ACF and Class War.

We consider the vast bulk of the so-called "Anarchist Movement" to be part of the left and therefore counter-revolutionary. However, this doesn't mean that all groups that use the name "Anarchist" are leftist.

For the record, we do not consider the ACF to be Leftist. Although their politics a few years ago at the time of their former magazine "Virus" were pretty appalling, the ACF's politics today, as stated in their Aims and Principles, are very similar to ours.

Surely, you might say, a leftist group evolving lock,stock and barrel into a revolutionary group is unheard of!

Indeed, the best that can normally be hoped for is for a handful of people in a leftist group to radicalise to the point of becoming revolutionary and split from the group. However, with a very small group, the number of people coming to revolutionary politics could constitute a majority of the group, and this appears to have happened with the ACF.

Their magazine **Organise** has improved leaps and bounds over the last 18 months. On the specific issue of Anti-Fascism which prompted this correspondence, the ACF, unlike Class War, has now come out clearly against cross class alliances like AFA.

Some of the changes in their politics have been at least partly the result of a constructive dialogue between our two groups.

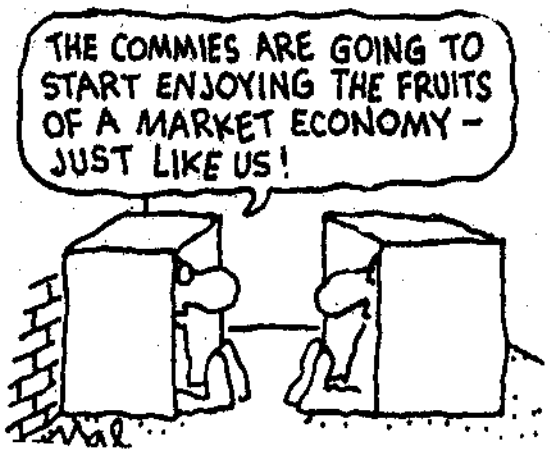
Having said this, some articles in **Organise** still display vestiges of the old ahistorical, "idealist" approach of traditional anarchism. There is also a continuing reluctance to jettison their identity with the anarchist movement as a whole, even if in practice they have rejected most strands of that movement, as represented by anarcho-syndicalism, lifestylism, anarcho-pacifism, radical liberalism and so on.

Even if **Organise** from time to time publishes the occasional article which in our opinion is rubbish, we have little hesitation in characterising the ACF as a revolutionary group.

Class War, however, is not a revolutionary group. It is a swamp which contains both revolutionary and leftist elements. A significant part of Class War has unambiguously counter-revolutionary positions, like support for the IRA or other capitalist states in waiting. They also have no clear understanding of the counter-revolutionary nature of trade unionism. But they also contain elements which are revolutionary or on the edge of being revolutionary and it is with these elements that Subversion has engaged in dialogue. For the record we have never had any organised relationship with the national Class War Federation, although we did briefly organise joint discussion meetings Manchester Class War.

We hope this answers your letter and look forward to any further communication on this or any other matter.

Note: **Organise!** can be obtained for 50p plus postage from the ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St., London E1 7QX.



Blast from the Past

The SWP and the Miners

The following extracts come from a pamphlet **How Socialist is the Socialist Workers Party.** This pamphlet was published in 1985 by the group **Wildcat**, the group that was the forerunner of **Subversion**.

With the SWP again calling for action by the TUC and the unions to "defend" the miners, we feel that the points this pamphlet makes about the last miners' strike are relevant today.

At the start of the strike the SWP announced that rank and file action was the key to victory ....This call for rank and file control of the strike was not repeated however. The SWP pulled back from a position which would have led them into outright opposition to the union bureaucracies. Instead, as usual, it attempted to steer a middle course between the union leaders and militant activists.

Following the mass pickets at Orgreave this became much more dificult....

The SWP later claimed that Orgreave had shown that "area bureaucracies were able to block the scale of mobilisations necessary for effective mass picketing."(Solalist Worker 3.11.84). In fact what Orgreave really showed was that effective mass picketing was impossible unless militant miners seized control of the strike from the NUM. Obviously this would be no easy task. Moreover any organisation that made this call would not be well received by many of the most militant miners, who remained fiercely loyal to the NUM, despite the fact it was sabotaging their efforts to win the strike. The SWP were not prepared to risk this unpopularity.

THE SWP AND THE TUC

The consequences of attempting to work through the unions can be seen in the SWP's attitude to the TUC..... [their] words of caution were forgotten as Socialist Worker euphorically declared:

"The TUC resolution in support of the miners can open the way to victory in the coal strike." (SW 8.9.84)

What about the SWP's call for activists to 'translate the words of any TUC resolution into deeds"? Well sorry .... what we (i.e. the SWP) really meant was that activists should ask TUC leaders to translate the words of their resolutions into deeds. In other words ,its just the same old tired Trotskyist call to "force the leaders to act" after all:

"What You Can Do
...send a flood of resolutions to union executives and the TUC general council demanding full support for the NUM. Insist the TUC launches a massive campaign in support of the strike..." (SW 17.12.84)

All of this would be comical if it wasn't so serious. The belief that solidarity for the miners can be organised through the TUC is one of the most important causes of the weakness of the strike. By adding its 'radical' support to this illusion the SWP is helping to defeat the strike.

THE SWP AND THE 'HIT SQUADS'

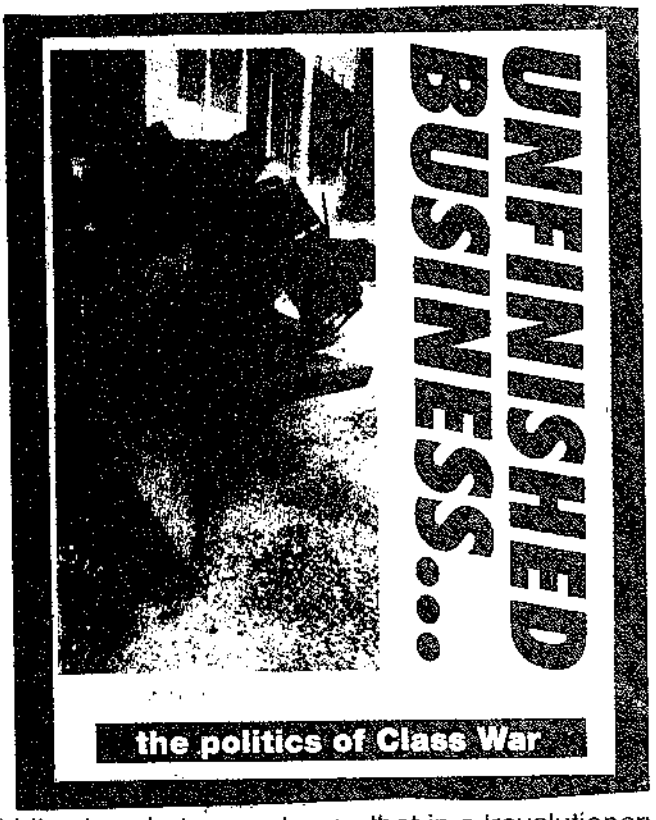
Miners have seen the need to meet state violence with their own violence. Organised in a paramilitary fashion, working in semi-clandestinity, the 'hit squads' have attacked NCB installations, scab firms and strikebreakers. Workers in some pit villages have organised semi-insurrectionary attacks on the police. This is one of the most important gains of the strike. It marks a practical break with the peaceful traditions of trade unionism. It marks the recognition of the need for all-out class war against the bosses.

The SWP condemns the activities of the 'hit squads' as "individual acts of violence" which "can very easily endanger the strike"(SW 2.6.84). However the actions of the 'hit squads' are not individual acts. They are organised secretly of necesssity. But they are supported by militant activists as essential back up for more traditional actions such as picketing.

The truth is that the straightforward, practical violence of the 'hit squads' is simply too revolutionary for the SWP.

A few copies of this pamphlet are available from us. Send 50p for a copy.

REVIEW



UNFINISHED BUSINESS ..... the politics of Class War. AK Press £4.50

This long awaited book represents a serious and welcome attempt by the Class War Federation to sort out its own politics and present them to the working class in a clear and comprehensible language.

Subversion shares some important areas of political agreement with Class War which are hammered home in this publication. In Summary these are:-

1. A clear rejection of 'reformism' as a way forward for the working class and a commitment to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and its state.
2. A recognition that the overthrow of capitalism means the complete abolition of the wages system, money and the market in all their forms.
3. Rejection of the 'old labour movement' as represented by the Labour Party and the trade unions and a commitment to independent working class struggle.
4. The need to combat racism and sexism within the context of the class struggle.

They also reject, as we do, Leninist views on revolutionary organisation. Whilst they continue to use the term 'federalism' to describe their approach to organisation, they clearly do not mean by this the kind of 'every idea or tactic is of equal value' and 'every individual or group can go its own way' approach of traditional anarchism.

Having said this there are some important weaknesses in the book which are very much hangovers from traditional left wing politics and in particular, anarchism.

Firstly, their analysis of capitalist class structures is very confused. They attempt an amalgam of 'Marxist' and anarchist definitions of class, relating this to 'wealth or property' ownership on the one hand and 'social power' on the other, rather than a straightforward 'relationship to the means of production' definition which we would use.

We wouldn't disagree with them when they say that capitalism is basically divided into three classes; the capitalist or ruling class; the middle class; and the working class. But their estimate of the size and importance of the 'middle class' is completely mistaken and their examples of who make up these classes reveals the muddle they've got themselves into. For instance, they say that rank and file soldiers are working class but rank and file policemen are not! Despite both being part of the state apparatus of repression. This distinction sees them reverting to an ideological rather than a material definition of class. They classify people like teachers and doctors as middle class but go on to say that in a 'revolutionary' period a large section of the 'middle class' will come over to the working class side, whilst sections of the working class will side with the capitalists. But if teachers and their like have distinctive and opposing class interests to the workers, why should they? They also imply that 'peasants', i.e. small agricultural landowners, could be considered working class, whilst small business owners are clearly middle class!

What Class War have failed to do is make a materialist analysis of the way capitalism has developed over the last 150 years and how this has effected its class structure.

Modern capitalism is based on a complex division of labour on an international scale. Putting it very simply, commodities are no longer produced in factories and surplus value extracted from individual factory workers, but are the social product of the 'collective worker' as represented by factory, transport, communication, educational, health, housing and other workers. For example, whereas teachers in the early days of capitalism were for all practical purposes 'outside ' the production process and for all their low pay, 'middle class' today we have a mass education industry fully integrated into the production process, with teachers playing their part in the creation of the social product of capitalism. Most teachers have become working class. This isn't to deny that the role of teachers inclines them to conservatism and places obstacles to their becoming class conscious. But this equally apply to other sections of the working class. It does mean that there is a material basis for teachers and other similar groups of workers to be drawn into the advancing class struggle when it reaches a certain pitch. Even today it is fair to say that there were probably more teachers actively involved in supporting the last British miners' strike than there were 'working class' soldiers!

Unfinished business cont'd.

There is certainly more chance of teachers and other 'professional' workers becoming involved in a revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of capitalism than there is the remnants of the peasantry or small time business people and others of the traditional middle class which still survives.

The important point for us is the relationship of people to the means of production. Thus many doctors running their own business might be 'middle class' whereas others fully employed in the NHS could more reasonable be considered working class. As Class War themselves say, there are many grey areas and it is certainly true to say that there is much more class mobility amongst some sections of the (mainly better paid) working class than others. The potential for upward mobility may detrimentally effect the ideology of some sectors of the working class, it doesn't alter their objective class position at any given time.

A radical, militant and collective working class movement may well develop initially amongst the traditional working class - i.e. average manual and office workers. A recognition of this is important to our political strategy. It will only successfully go on to challenge capitalism if it draws in firstly the unemployed and then the rest of the modern working class. We can't expect more than a handful of genuinely 'middle class' people to become committed to the movement precisely because they have got more to lose than gain in the immediate situation.

Secondly, Class War have an extremely ambivalent attitude towards nationalism.
On the one hand they state correctly that 'Nationalism is one of the ways of keeping the working class divided', but then they say, '....in the face of often brutal oppression nationalism gives working class people something. That "something" is identity, pride, a feeling of community and solidarity....'

We would say it gives the working class a **false** sense of pride, a **false** identity and a **false** sense of community and solidarity.

We do recognise, as Class War say, that in places like Northern Ireland many of the struggles engaged in by the Catholic working class are not **purely** nationalist. But our job is to clearly split the nationalist from the class elements, both theoretically and practically, not fudge the two as Class War does.

Sadly, even the strengths of this book are not consistently carried through in the practice of the Class War group. This is shown starkly in their confused approach to the trade unions. One of their very few members to talk and write regularly about workplace struggle is Dave Douglass, but despite some interesting insights into aspects of this struggle he still promotes an outdated 'rank and falsetto' approach which ends up defending the Trade Unions. (See the interesting Wildcat pamphlet "Outside and Against the Unions" for a criticism of his views.)

As worrying, is the 'idealist' tendency in Class War which sees many of their members worn out in an endless search for the 'right formula' that will get their ideas across to the working class. This was particularly evident at their final "Communities of Resistance" Rally in London where any critical discussion was deliberately squashed, with instant appeals for us to 'get stuck in' and 'do something' only to be told by Class War at the end that their idea of doing something was yet another typical lefty "Day of Action" stunt.

Militant continued from back page

poll tax movement . Earlier this year independent anti-poll tax groups tried to organise a demonstration in Manchester. Militant responded by organising one for the same day in Glasgow. This was to be a national demonstration, so the independent groups called off their Manchester demo. Militant then didn't bother to organise for the Glasgow demo, which on the day was turned into a rally for Tommy Sheridan, who was then standing as MP for Pollock.

Another problem developed. Anti poll tax meetings began not to take place. Where there were no Militant members then no meetings took place. In Blackley (a suburb of Manchester) they no members before the Poll Tax was implemented. Militant organised one meeting. Over 200 people attended that meeting. Nobody joined Militant after that meeting. This was to be the only anti poll tax meeting to take place in Blackley. Later Militant gained **one** member in that area. Despite many requests from him, and a lot of interest from local people Militant would not organise another meeting. Because of Militant's attempt to own, run and use the anti poll tax unions as a front they soon faded, became disorganised or non-existent in areas like this. But a lot of money was raised at meetings and Militant is never slow to catch on to making money.

At branch meetings, members of Militant were told that because of the protection they were getting from the anti-poll tax federation it was time to increase subs. So the money any members were saving by not paying the poll tax could go to the organisation! How many did raise their subs we don't know. What we do know is that the Militant led and backed All Britain Anti Poll Tax Federation was a failure.

The reasons for this failure, the failure to stop bailiffs, courts, wage arrestments and imprisonment was that the anti poll tax federation was controlled by just a handful of full time NCOs.[1]

The anti poll tax movement was severely weakened through a large part of it being dominated by Militant front organisations.

Next issue: Militant and Gay Liberation

[1] Militant claimed 8000 members. Ted Grant recently put the true figure at just 1500 fully paid up members.

Militant

the truth behind the myth

[The following article has been written by a member of Subversion who recently left Militant.]

Anybody new to **Subversion** will gather that we are a radical organisation dedicated to revolution and the final destruction of capitalism and the smashing of the state.

But what about groups that claim to be revolutionary? How revolutionary is Militant?

"Well, that's them gone," spoke a full timer, about two members who left Militant earlier this year when the organisation split, "now let's get down to building Britain's only true revolutionary organisation and non-poll tax paying organisation..."[1]

How true is this statement?

We all know the answer, but let's take a look at Militant, at its work and inside Militant itself.

Militant was formed in 1952 in Liverpool, as a trotskyist tendency just as it still is today. From the moment it was formed it entered into entrist work in the Labour party, acting as a party within a party. Militant was to centre itself around its newspaper, **Militant** - but it was in effect a secret sect. It said it was just a paper - an act of political denial which was to last for the next 40 years.[2]

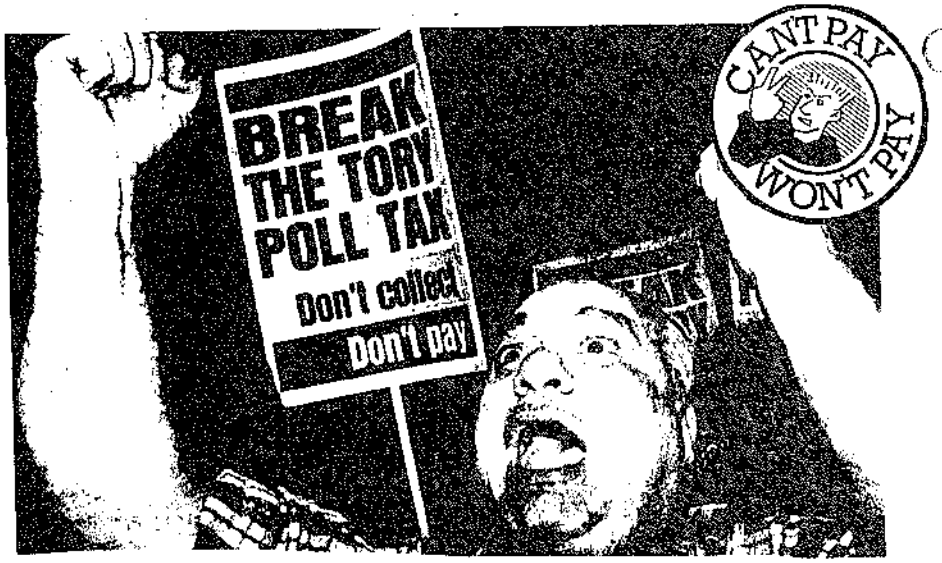
The Poll Tax Question.

When the Poll Tax was introduced, Militant saw its golden hour, its chance to capture and fire the imagination of the working class, to spread "revolutionary" politics in the anti-poll tax unions and to use them for recruitment.

The main reasons Militant formed their anti-poll tax unions was to make a name for themselves and to recruit for Militant. Although Militant put a lot of work into the anti-poll tax movement, recruitment via this route was small. In some towns, for instance like Oldham, not one member of the public joined them.

Forming the anti-poll tax unions was an act of political opportunism. Where Militant was strong enough they made sure all people in charge were Militant members or , as they say, "supporters".

Despite the growing anger at the poll tax and the threat of court, bailiffs and imprisonment, Militant stayed with its policy of legality. All actions and demonstrations had to stick to the law. Any act outside the law was not to be tolerated.



No outside help wanted

The test of how revolutionary Militant were was about to come.

The rising tide of anger at the Poll Tax led to the biggest demonstration in London for many years. Militant wanted an orderly and peaceful march. They were leading the demonstration and did not want any acts of anger.

The demonstration soon became a riot as anger boiled over. After the Battle of Trafalgar Square, Militant went to the press and on the radio threatened to nark on rioters. A "revolutionary organisation" was threatening to grass up and name rioters to the class enemy, the police.

At a rally soon afterwards, Tommy Sheridan, chair of the All Britain Anti Poll Tax Federation, echoed this. As soon as he stopped speaking angry chants rang out from the crowd. Militant had shot itself in the foot. The damage had been done. Many working class people never forgot this statement, Militant had shown its true colours.

From the beginning, Militant has wanted to lead the anti-

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1 Quote made in January 1992 by a full-time NCO

2 Some members of Militant still claim it is just a paper.

Subversion

13 Free

Special Jurassic Issue!!

Artists impression: note specially adapted fangs for "representing" workers.

Exclusive! Union Bosses Secret Identities Revealed

Also in this issue:

Burnsall, Timex, Teachers, Bosnia, Prisoners and more!

Industrial News

The first four articles in this issue all deal with different aspects of the class struggle at work.

The first two are about the Timex dispute in Dundee. The article *Cops - Four Different Kinds* , comes from a broadsheet called **Troublemaker**, produced in Glasgow by supporters of the Timex Strike. Unfortunately the broadsheet gave no contact address.

The third article concerns the antics of the Manchester Burnsall Strikers Support Group. The final article is about the ongoing teachers dispute over testing.

pamphlets

Ireland. Nationalism and Imperialism. The Myths Exploded. Why the British State and the IRA both defend capitalism. 50p inc. postage.

Labouring in Vain. A socialist analysis of the Labour party from its formation to today. 50p inc.postage.

Left-Wing Communism in Britain 1917-21 ... An infantile disorder. By Bob Jones, Pirate Press. 60p inc postage.

Fascism and Anti-Fascism by J Barrot, Pirate Press. £1.50 inc postage.

Back issues. Some copies of Subversion 9, 10,11 and 12 left. Send a donation and 24p stamp.

All cheques payable to Subversion.

Winter Day School

We are organising a day school in Manchester on Saturday 27th November, in conjunction with the ACF.

The subject will be: ***WORKPLACE STRUGGLES - BEYOND RANK AND FILE TRADE UNIONISM.***

If you want further details write to Subversion, Dept 10, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW. Please state if you have any special requirements or need child care for the day.

Want to Get Involved?

If you agree with our basic politics, then why not get involved? You could:

1. Join Subversion. We have members in Manchester, Oldham and Leeds.
2. Write to us and let us know you're out there.
3. Take some extra copies to distribute.
4. Try writing short articles - we'll happily give you advice if you want.
5. Send us some money! Cheques and POs payable to **SUBVERSION**
6. Arrange to meet us.

Printed and published by: SUBVERSION, Dept 10,1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW.

Burnsall Strike

with friends like these - who needs racists?

For over a year the strikers at Burnsall Ltd in Smethwick, where the conditions workers have to bear are appalling even by capitalist standards, have had to contend with the double enemy of the boss and the unions.

The GMB, to which the strikers "belong", has been sabotaging their strike in the time-honoured fashion. It has now plunged the dagger deep into the workers backs and called off the strike.

Despite this, and despite serious intimidation by the GMB to make the strikers comply, it seems they are determined to continue their fight.

What they need is support from other workers.

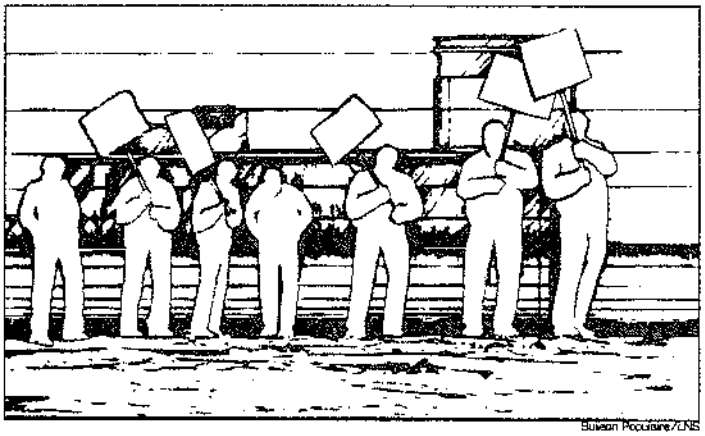
The only way forward for workers in struggle is to link up, and gain the active support of more and more workers. The bosses and unions, despite their charades, are in the last analysis united against the working class and we must be united against them, and not be taken in by the unions pretence at being on our side. This is true in all strikes and all struggles.The case of the Burnsall strike, however, reveals another false friend of the workers - left-wing groupings with their own political agenda to superimpose on the strike.

DIVIDE AND RULE

The Manchester Burnsall Strikers' Support Group has produced several leaflets which have been portraying this strike as a black issue (most of the strikers being Asian women) rather than a workers' issue. For instance their leaflets have slogans such as "Black Workers Fighting Back" and "Black Workers Demand JUSTICE" (sic); and hatred between workers.

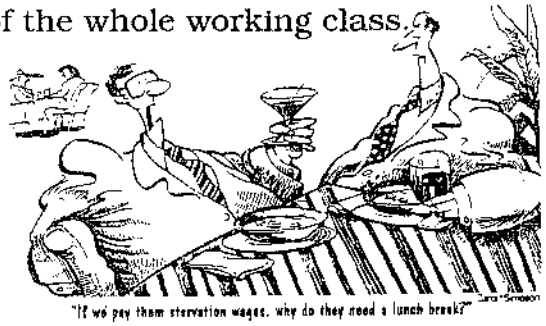
one of the leaflets relates that on one occasion "the strikers were attacked by three white scab workers from the factory". An approach such as this "support group" is taking is practically calculated to strengthen "racial" divisions and hatred between workers.

If it needs saying, let us say it again - the working class can only free itself from present day slavery by uniting as a class, all workers together, black and white, male and female, whatever the divisions our rulers use to keep us weak. The dead end of "racial" or national identity will always lead workers to perdit-



ion, as it has always done in the past (e.g. the anti-colonial movements which have given the workers nothing but more of the same). Only realising our identity as workers with a common interest world-wide, against all capitalist factions, will lead us to victory.

Groups like the Manchester Burnsall Strikers "Support" Group should be roundly condemned. Their politics are a lethal poison for workers, and for the cause of liberation of the whole working class.



"If we pay them starvation wages, why do they need a lunch break?"

The Timex Strike

TIME FOR CHANGE

The courageous resistance of 343 Timex strikers in Dundee to massive cuts in their wages and conditions and the subsequent threat to close the factory has been well documented elsewhere.

They, along with other smaller groups of workers such as those at"Burnsalls" and "Middlebrook Mushrooms" have demonstrated a long overdue militant determination to stand up against the bosses ever increasing demands for cuts in our standard of living and the preservation of their profits.

But courage and militancy on their own aren't enough to win this kind of dispute in the current world economic crisis. If they were, then much stronger groups such as the printers, seafarers and miners would not be in the disarray they are today.

Although Timex strikers rejected the attempts of national union 'leaders' to negotiate shabby deals with their bosses, they were content, initially, to leave the wider struggle, away from the workplace and the locality, to what they felt was 'their' union.

The support for regular mass pickets from workers in Dundee and elsewhere in Scotland and England was indeed impressive and achieved some notable, if passing, victories. But those of us with longer memories couldn't help but listen to the echoes of previous failed disputes, like Grunwicks in London, which relied heavily on picketing as a solution. The calls for "consumers" to boycott Timex products, however valid, also has worrying echoes in the Seamen's Unions efforts to derail the Channel Ferry strikes.Timex workers recognised the need for 'solidarity', as other workers recognised the important knock on effect of a victory for the Timex workers on their own disputes. Support in the form of union resolutions, donations, demonstrations and attendance at pickets has been forthcoming.

What has been missing is the active solidarity involved in spreading the strike, not only to other workers in the multi-national of which Timex is just part, but across both industrial and geographica boundaries. The development of common actions, with common demands,directly under the control of those involved.

This isn't just the responsibility of Timex workers but something which we all need to take on board.

In the current situation 'isolation' means defeat and leaving things in the hands of the union, much less the political parties of all hues means isolation.

Timex workers have begun to organise themselves to seek active solidarity from others both in the multi-national and locally. This may prove to be too little, too late, but the fight certainly isn't over yet.

Whatever the outcome we should take heart from the determination and courage of our class brothers and sisters at Timex and learn both from the positive and negative lessons of this strike in the struggles to come

For further information, write to: COUNTER INFORMATION: Ph C1, 11 Forth Street, Edinburgh, EH1.

Donations to: Timex Strike Fund, AEEU, 2 Union St., Dundee, Scotland. Tel 0382 22406

COPS—FOUR DIFFERENT KINDS

1 THE BASTARDS IN BLUE

So the cops are driving in wood for the pickets' braziers. So they've only kidnapped a few people and stopped the odd bus. Poor darlings, they must be cold and bored too...Anyone who thinks like this should wise up fast. **The cops are the main reason work hasn't been stopped**—and for those who want to stop the plant they're the most important immediate enemy. The only reason they're there is to defend the 'right to scab'.

The police force only exists so that scum like Hall, Olsen, Major and Yeltsin can keep on collecting the profit from forcing the poor to work. So it's obvious that when workers look like reducing the bosses' profits, or preventing extra profits by resisting cuts in wages or conditions, the filth will turn up to protect management's right to manage. We could be wrong, but we have not sensed much hatred for the cops among the sacked strikers. We hope this changes soon. If the struggle hots up, it's bound to.

2 UNION COPS

Since victory means imagination, escalation, and a physical battle with the cops, rather than negotiations between Hall and a bunch of union bureaucrats, it's clear that the union leaders and structure will fight to stop workers doing the necessary. Already a Timex shop steward, banned by interdict from attending demonstrations, has been banned by the AEEU higher-ups from speaking at a rally held by Albion workers on the Clyde. They've also sent a letter to all strikers telling them that any more trouble on the picket-line could mean the withdrawal of union 'support', i.e. strike pay. Trade-unionism is thus directly conflicting with workers' solidarity and the escalation of trouble.

What the union leaders want is a drawn-out strike leading to a crappy deal on pensions or severance pay, if anything at all. They have made it very clear that they do not want work to stop, since that could only happen by violence, and they don't want that or any other kind of trouble. That would mean strikers and supporters acting together as a mass, and the union leaders would be left without a role. Indeed, they could easily be seen for the collaborating 'social firemen' that they are.

Of course union money could be sequestrated, but one need only remember that if it was in the hands of the workers in the first place, the workers could try themselves to hide it from the authorities, **and** try to escalate the strike at the same time. The idea of winning by long-term peaceful picketing, maybe extending into a second winter, is simply a fantasy. Of course escalation means solidarity. But it doesn't mean the 'labour movement', any more than it means waiting for parliamentary shitbags to go to committee meetings. Solidarity means standing together on the picket-line, fighting together against the police so as to stop the scab buses, getting support from as many other claimants and workers as possible; it means direct delegations to other workplaces, such as have already gone to Albion and the English coalfields.

3 LEFTY COPS

Everyone's heard about the presence of various extreme leftist parties on the picket-line. Most of them are easily spottable with their bunches of newspapers and their monotonous slogans.

The only kind of 'escalation' these parties want is one subordinate to the politicking of wally Trotskyists on one side, and the leaders of the STUC on the other. 'Get the STUC to call a general strike' they whinge. Maybe we should remember how much the STUC and TUC have supported us in the past...Like at Ravenscraig—remember?

Some details. In the Timex dispute the 'Socialist Workers' Party' (or Student Wallies' Party?) has been very strict in telling its members not to get involved in any trouble. Sell the paper, have a shout, make sure you wave your papers to the media, comrade! Meanwhile Militant have brought down their great leader "Shop'Em" Sheridan, a Glasgow councillor who advocated grassing after the London poll tax riot. We wonder how long the angry youth of places like Pollok will put up with such creeps.

People who encourage others to put their faith in union leaders, particularly TUC leaders, must be either very naive or else just manipulative bastards. For the leftist followers it's usually the first, whilst for the leaders and 'old hands' it's usually the second. Basically they don't think we're able to organise and fight without politicos telling us what to do. That's why they say we should try to get support from leaders of the official labour movement: they want us to bang our heads against brick walls, fail, and hopefully then look to the Trots for leadership.

Of course this won't happen here, but it's still worth remembering that 'workers' governments' have always slashed living-standards whenever they have deemed it necessary, e.g. in Russia after 1917, or Nicaragua after 1982.

Whilst 'preparing for power' the leftists do want things to be stirred up a *bit*, but only on condition that the working class doesn't get completely out of external control. Then there'd be no need for representatives in union offices, lefty party-sellers and such like. People might even organise themselves to stick the boot in to the very roots of exploitation: money, work, and the State. And that the leftists simply couldn't tolerate.

4 MEDIA COPS

Recently the picket-line has seemed infested with cameramen and journalists, especially when they think there might be trouble. Quite a few journalists have given the impression that they support the strike.

A journalist for the big media is either a spy-cum-disinformationist for a huge company like Murdoch's multinational, or else works directly for State TV. It's a total illusion to think that any kind of coverage by these bastards can possibly benefit the strikers.

Strikers have either been portrayed like near-extinct animals in a zoo, or else as fodder for 'outside agitators' selling lefty papers. Journo Chris Fletcher interviewed 'all sides'—strikers, Peter Hall, scabs, some wally academic from Dundee Uni—for Murdoch's *Sunday Times* (28 March). Chris liked the women strikers: that's why the bastard described how they bent over and "moved with their hips" when Hall came out, "their bodies turning in perfect harmony with his car." Women who have refused to be treated like objects by Timex thus get their time and motion studied in the national press.

As for cameramen, we can only say that it's a shame people aren't more conscious of their mentality. These leeches like pictures of trouble. We all know that so far the trouble they've filmed has been exaggerated, but if a big battle breaks out **they won't hesitate to hand over their film to the police.** Some plainclothes photographers are probably coppers anyway. At the very least, anyone taking pictures should be hassled to explain themselves. ■

A Testing Time For Teachers

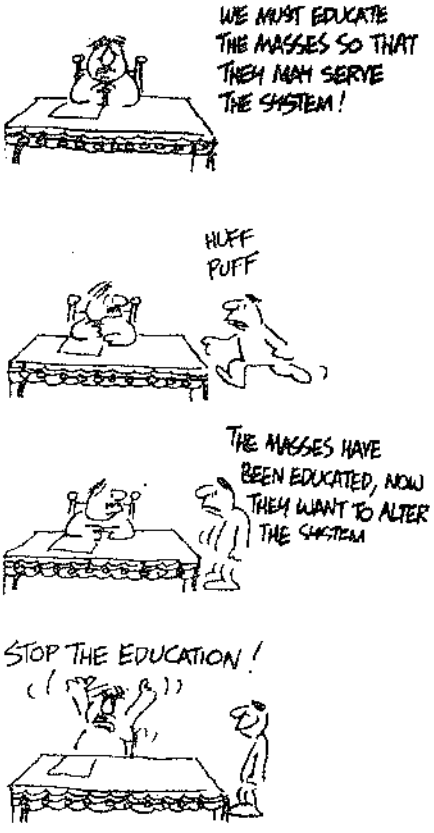
Education has hardly been out of the news in the last few years. Schools opting out of local authority control, conflicts over 'parental choice',complaints about 'falling standards', local management of schools and testing have all caught the attention of the media. They have arisen because the Government is in the process of reforming education. The 1988 Education Reform Act is intended to meet industrialists' complaints about the quality of their future workforce. And with even closer integration into line with those on the Continent.

Why, then is their so much resistance to these changes and what is the significance of this for the wider class struggle?

Before answering this, we need to look at the origins of the current problem which goes back as far as the industrial revolution. Britain was the first country to industrialise. Facing little competition at that time, the ruling class did not see any need for mass education or training geared towards economic advancement in the way that exists today. Indeed the State did not intervene in the education of the masses until as late as the twentieth century when state secondary schools were first introduced. This contrasted greatly with the major European countries, where the need to catch up with Britain involved a considerable degree of intervention to gear education to economic development. The result is a legacy which still persists: in a word, backwardness. Comparatively low rates of 'staying on', lower numbers gaining qualifications, lower numbers going to university. Britain really is the "thick man" of Europe!

The problem for the ruling class today is how to make what they have inherited meet the needs of British capitalism. As things stand this is quite a tall order. Technology has changed, old skills have died, new ones have arisen. Mass unemployment has meant that people are likely to change the type of work they do much more frequently. What's therefore needed today is a malleable, flexible workforce which is prepared to accept any variety of working conditions. Hence the need to modernise the education system.

A start towards modernisation had been made during the 60's and early 70's. Wilson's "white heat of technological change" required that many of the barriers to education for the working class be removed: the 11+ was abolished, comprehensive schools replaced grammar and secondary


WE MUST EDUCATE THE MASSES SO THAT THEY MAY SERVE THE SYSTEM!
HUFF PUFF
THE MASSES HAVE BEEN EDUCATED, NOW THEY WANT TO ALTER THE SYSTEM
STOP THE EDUCATION!

modern, and the school leaving age rose to 16. Britain, like other European countries, needed an adaptable work-force to cope with the changes. Hence the diversification and liberalisation of the curriculum which occurred during

these years along with mixed ability and child-centred teaching methods. These were real gains for the working class although they also suited capitalism's needs at that time. But these developments (and the money which funded them) were soon cut short.

The start of the recession, by the mid-70's meant no jobs for thousands of school leavers. And the need to cut costs led to some fundamental questioning about the role and purpose of education in the new economic era. The "fringe" ideas of the so-called 'Black Paper' group, who were concerned about the threat to standards posed by

non-selective education, suddenly became respectable. More significantly, Labour PM Callaghan took up the cudgel in the Great Education Debate, attacking the anti-business ethos in schools: ".....some teachers and some schools may have overemphasised the importance of preparing boys and girls for their roles in society compared with the need toprepare them for their economic role". (Guardian 13.10.76)

There is a direct line here between Callaghan's speech and the Tories' modernisation strategy today. The Reform Act is meant to gear education more tightly to the needs of industry. The only problem is that it involves expenditure that capitalism can no longer afford

The SATS tests boycott is the first major blow against the Government's efforts to implement this legislation. For one thing it has involved teachers in all three main unions. With parents behind them, it seems to have left the Tories in an isolated position, politically. How long the Unions support the boycott remains to be seen. One big problem for the bureaucrats is that a boycott controlled by them, is still infinitely preferable to a strike. An effective pay cut for this year has done much to mobilise the majority of teachers behind the current action. And from Pattern's "Mum's Army" threat recently, there's no sign these attacks will cease.

It's probably true also, however, that the majority of teachers have not perceived the tests issue beyond that of 'workload'. Some unions have highlighted the "educational unsuitability" of the tests. A smaller minority of teachers have become aware that this form of testing, and its links with league tables and performance related pay, is changing how they teach in ways that are not beneficial to their pupils. An even smaller minority are opposed to the national curriculum in principle. It represents State involvement in education on an unprecedented scale with the aim not of broadening minds but of limiting the educational aspirations of the majority of children and at the cheapest possible price! Testing is a way of determining both the method and content of lessons. Child-centred learning goes out of the window. With the heavier emphasis on narrow 'vocational' training for less able pupils, along with industrial schemes like Compact, modernisation in a time of rising unemployment means more social control to keep the lower orders in their place.

How will these developments affect class struggle? The ideology of teaching as a profession is wearing thin as redundancies, pay cuts, deteriorating conditions, etc. take their toll. Teachers are slowly realising that they are only workers, controlling other (younger) workers. The result already is low morale, absenteeism, resignations and industrial action. This will do much to undermine the 'social controlling' function the State expects teachers to carry out. And what about those on the receiving end of all this: the school kids? How long will it be before they see through a system which is only training them for the dole?

They said computers would free us from boring repetitive tasks.
In a way they were right...
Because of my repetitive strain injury...
I may never work again.
Carol Simpson

Bosnia - Cock-Up or Conspiracy?

INTRODUCTION

We are publishing the following article as a contribution towards an understanding of what has been happening recently in former Yugoslavia, and in particular the role of the US/UN. Not all of our group agree with the article's basic argument, that there has been a conscious policy of support for Serbia. Some of us believe that the US/UN, having no vital strategic interests at stake in ex-Yugoslavia, has tried to have as little involvement as possible in the `crisis' there, and that it is this which has allowed Serbia, as the region's strongest military power, to largely have its own way. We regard it as a sign of the health of a revolutionary group that differences of opinion on issues such as this are not hidden or suppressed, and invite you to join in the debate.

YUGOSLAVIA: ALL GOING TO PLAN

"We have achieved exactly all our objectives since the beginning of this crisis" - UN commander General Philippe Morillon, quoted on 19 April 1993, after the surrender of Srebrenica.

If actions speak louder than words, let's ignore for a moment all the hot-air about "human rights" and "punishing aggressors", and look at what the West has actually done in ex-Yugoslavia over the past few months.

CONSPIRACY OR COCK-UP?

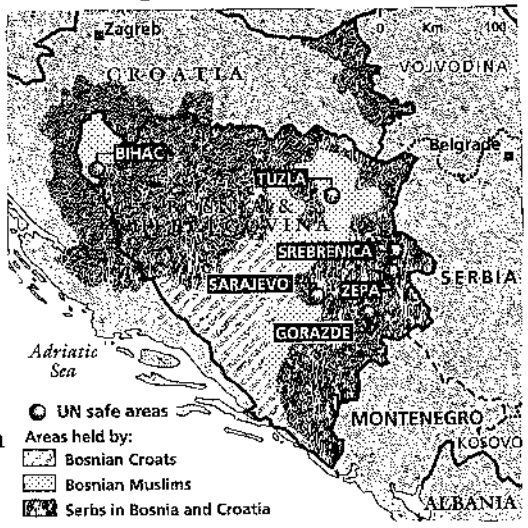
Newspaper headlines have typically portrayed the West "Wandering into a Balkan Blunderland", with articles describing how a "catalogue of errors has turned a crisis into a tragedy" (e.g. Independent on Sunday 30.5.93).

We on the other hand are not so naive as to believe that the West (i.e. principally the US/UN) could be quite so careless, quite so often. Labour MP, Michael "Shell the Serbs" Meacher, was closer to the mark when he wrote that the UN has acted as "an unwilling accomplice of the Serbian war machine". Leave out the "unwilling" bit, and he's spot-on.

There is certainly ample evidence to support the suggestion, put forward by some of the more perceptive commentators on Yugoslavia, that there has been "an actual policy considered somewhere in Whitehall or Washington" which has reflected "pro-Belgrade leanings" (Balkan War Report April/May 93).

ENCLAVES

This was particularly striking in the way the UN behaved towards the besieged Muslim* enclaves in Bosnia, where UN troops to all intents and purposes acted to put the finishing touches to sieges imposed by the Serbs.



In April, for example, the commander of UN forces, Gen. Morillon, negotiated a deal with the Bosnian Serb army to hand Srebrenica to the Serbs in exchange for the evacuation of its 30,000 inhabitants to to Tuzla. But while the town continued to hold out, the Bosnian authorities continually blocked all UN attempts to move out any civilians, apart from the sick and wounded, stating that the evacuation of civilians would make the town easy prey for the Serbs, and that the UN was actively assisting in `ethnic cleansing'. When UN troops did eventually enter Srebrenica, the `demilitarisation' they carried out was directed entirely against the Muslims - the soldiers defending the town either had to flee or surrender their weapons and uniforms, while the Serb weaponry surrounding the town was left untouched.

The same thing happened the following month in Zepa, again in the face of opposition from the Bosnian government, which added that the disarming of Srebrenica and Zepa allowed the Serbs to transfer 10,000 troops to tighten the screws on the besieged

town of Gorazde. The two opposing factions were quite clear about the effect of the UN intervention: while the Bosnian Serbs celebrated a victory, Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic spoke of "capitulation". Not without good reason did the Sarajevo newspaper Oslobodjenje comment: "General Morillon's dramatic media display in Srebrenica has more behind it than generous sympathy for Bosnians".

ARMS EMBARGO

There are many other instances where the effect of western policy has been to aid the Serbs. The arms embargo is an obvious example. US Vice-President Al Gore could not have put it more plainly when he said at the end of April: "The international community is, in a sense, already taking sides in the conflict, because the Serbians have all the weapons that they need."

AID

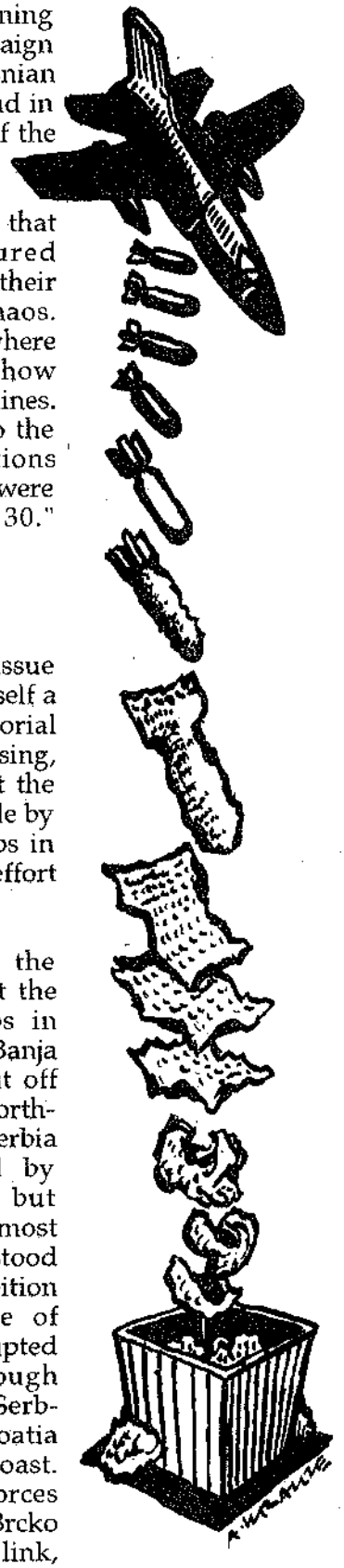
The provision of `humanitarian aid' is another area where things are not as they appear on the surface. The need to not endanger UN aid workers and their military escorts was frequently cited in the West as a reason for not escalating the conflict by bombing Serb-held positions in Bosnia. For just this reason the Bosnian government more than once requested the entire UN humanitarian relief effort to "pack up and leave". Of course, it didn't.

Not all aid has been provided under UN auspices. There has also been other initiatives such as the 500-vehicle `Convoy of Joy' which travelled from Split to Tuzla in June. Along the way many of its cars and lorries were ambushed by Croats, their contents looted, and drivers beaten up or killed.

But why take aid by road through hostile territory when it could be flown direct to Dubrave airfield at Tuzla with the protection of the UN's `Operation Deny Flight'? In April the US relief agency Americares was preparing to do just that. A 38-tonne cargo of medical supplies worth over $2 million lay in Venice waiting to be airlifted to Tuzla. Suddenly the UN told the Italians to refuse flight clearance. Why? Because "Radovan Karadzic [the Bosnian Serb leader] and his sidekick Gen. Ratko Mladic both opposed the opening of the airport...and UNPROFOR was concerned not to upset negotiations with them which had `reached a delicate stage'". (Balkan War Report April/May 93).

Still on the subject of aid, Bosnian journalist Haris Nezirovic has argued that airdrops of food over besieged Muslim enclaves in eastern Bosnia by US planes in March played a significant part in undermining the hitherto successful campaign waged by units of the Bosnian army based in Srebrenica and in turning the tide in favour of the Serbs:

"The United States airdrops that started in March lured thousands more men from their positions and sparked chaos. Commanders lost track of where their soldiers were and how many they had on the front lines. When the Serbs returned to the offensive, Bosnian positions previously held by 100 men were held by only 20 or 30." (Guardian 15.4.93).



VANCE-OWEN

Then there was the whole issue of the Vance-Owen Plan - itself a blatant incitement to territorial expansion and ethnic cleansing, as was widely remarked at the time - and the promises made by UN "mediators" to the Serbs in Belgrade and Bosnia in an effort to induce them to accept it.

A key Serb objection to the Vance-Owen Plan was that the province allotted to Serbs in north-west Bosnia (around Banja Luka) would have been cut off from the Serb province in north-east Bosnia bordering on Serbia itself. An area allotted by Vance-Owen to Croats, but actually occupied for the most part by Bosnian Muslims, stood in the way of the Serb ambition to secure a large swathe of territory sweeping uninterrupted from Serbia proper through northern Bosnia and the Serb-held Krajina region of Croatia virtually to the Adriatic coast. For a whole year Serb forces based around the town of Brcko had fought to secure this link, but without lasting success.

On 21 April, however, Lord Owen emerged from a meeting with Serb leaders in Belgrade saying that the Serbs should be given a "protected throughway" in this region. The promise of a 6-mile-wide, UN-patrolled

corridor linking Serb-held regions in eastern and western Bosnia was instrumental in persuading Serbian President Slobodan Milosovic and Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic to finally accept the Vance-Owen Plan at the Athens conference at the start of May. In other words, what the Serbs had been unable to achieve by twelve months of military action, the UN was prepared to hand over for nothing more than a couple of signatures on a piece of paper. Truly the pen is mightier than the sword!

Following the Athens conference, Karadzic and Milosevic both revealed another promise conceded by UN negotiators in exchange for acceptance of the Vance-Owen Plan. To allay the concerns of Serb minorities within the provinces allotted under the plan to Croats or Muslims, it had been agreed that no Croat or Muslim forces (e.g. police or troops) would be allowed to enter these Serb areas, and that this prohibition would be enforced by UN patrols.

In real terms the outcome of this concession would have been to maintain effective Serb control over the 25% of Bosnian territory occupied by Serb forces on top of the 45% allotted to them under the Vance-Owen Plan. In this respect, the promise made to Milosevic and Karadzic closely resembled, in miniature, one element of the January 1992 ceasefire (worked out by Cyrus Vance) which ended the 1991 war between Serbia and Croatia. Under that agreement, the UN moved in to guard the borders of the 30% of Croatian territory in Krajina and eastern Slavonia taken over by Serb forces, forcibly barred the return of refugees, and left the Serbs there free to consolidate their power while working towards unification with Greater Serbia.

THE U.S. AND GERMANY

Looking at all of this as a whole, what is clear is that a whole series of measures have been taken by the US/UN which have worked to the advantage of Serbian aims and ambitions. If this has been the result, not of "diplomatic ineptitude" (Lord Owen's phrase), but, as we would argue, a deliberate policy, the question then arises: what lies behind this strategy?

It is well known that in June 1991, the US Secretary of State, James Baker, on a visit to Belgrade, stated that the US believed that Yugoslavia should remain a single unified state. When, four days later, Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence, the Serb-dominated central Yugoslav authorities understood Baker's statement as an invitation to hold the country together by force - which they promptly attempted to do.

Around the same time, recently reunified Germany had begun to reassert its own historic goals in the Balkans, first by making EC economic assistance to Yugoslavia dependent on the Belgrade government's tolerance of "minority rights" (meaning the independence movements in Slovenia and Croatia), and then by pushing its EC partners into early recognition of the secessionist republics.

Although the process of realignment of imperialist blocs in the 'New World Order' has not yet advanced so far that the conflict in Yugoslavia can be seen as an out-and-out proxy war between two superpowers, it is with one eye on the possibility of future German expansionism that the US has by and large stood by its initial inclination to favour Belgrade, as a counterweight to Ljubljana and Zagreb.

SPILLING OVER

Thanks to US/UN complicity, Serbian war aims in Bosnia have been all but fulfilled: "We have what belongs to us, perhaps 10% more", stated the Yugoslav military chief of staff Zivota Panic at the end of April. Serbia also has 30% of Croatia (though at the time of writing the signs were that Croatia's tolerance of that situation was rapidly wearing thin).

In US eyes, however, by far the greatest interest about the whole crisis in former Yugoslavia isn't what happens to Bosnia - which is little more than a local affair, or at most "a European problem" - but concerns, in US President Bill Clinton's words, the need to find a way of "confining the conflict so it doesn't spread into Macedonia, Kosovo and other places...like Albania and Greece and Turkey" (Observer 23.5.93, Guardian 12.5.93).

KOSOVO, MACEDONIA & BEYOND

The Kosovo issue was instrumental in Milosevic's seizure of power in 1987. Because of the famous Battle of Kosovo Polje fought there in 1389 it is regarded as the "spiritual centre" of Serb nationalism. However, the fact that the region was the source of over 50% of former Yugoslavia's overall mineral production, 40% of its energy output, and also contains considerable oil and gas reserves, no doubt explains better why Milosevic is determined to keep it part of Serbia. Unfortunately for him, Serbs in Kosovo are outnumbered by 9 to 1 by 'ethnic Albanians', who are equally determined to leave Serbia and become part of Greater Albania.

A conflict involving Serbia, Kosovo and Albania could well spread to Macedonia, which itself has an Albanian population of at least half a million (25%). The independence of the ex-Yugoslav republic of Macedonia is in itself seen as a **continued next page**

provocation by both Serbia and Greece - two states with very close links. In the worst scenario, wars involving Serbia, Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia, Greece and possibly even Bulgaria could hardly be ignored by the state now firmly established as the Balkans' strongest power: Turkey.

CONTAINMENT

Thus it was with good reason that the UN deputy commander in Belgrade warned in June that "The situation in the southern part of former Yugoslavia is still potentially the most dangerous and inflammable in the region" (Guardian 3.6.93). The US's strategy is therefore one of "containment", as embodied in the statement signed jointly in Washington on 22 May 1993 by the US, UK, Russia, France and Spain (Germany was pointedly excluded, much to the fury of its defence minister Volker Ruhe who later railed against the agreement's "'morally catastrophic' attitude towards Serbian territorial gains").

While media attention focussed on the declaration of six "safe havens" for Muslims in Bosnia (just how hollow this announcement was, was summed up in the prophetic words of the UN official who commented: "Safe areas do not imply everybody will be safe"), the most important sections of the agreement were what it said about Kosovo - "Human rights should be respected...although we do not support declarations of independence there" - and Macedonia: "It is essential that everyone in the region understands that aggression against the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia would have grave consequences". The seriousness of this threat has been underlined by the fact that Macedonia is the only part of ex-Yugoslavia where the US has sent troops to join the UN "peace-keeping" force.

MILOSEVIC

Can Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic be trusted to pay heed? Already the US has tested his compliance. When at the end of April Clinton gave the impression that he was serious aboutordering the bombing of Serb military targets in Bosnia, Milosevic immediately stated: "We choose peace". Overnight in the public perception he was transformed from a belligerent demagogue into the voice of moderation, hero of the "last-ditch" peace talks in Athens, the man who compelled his Bosnian protege Karadzic to admit: "The Serbian side is ready for immediate and unconditional peace".

Never mind that subsequently the Bosnian Serb parliament and a referendum in the Serb-held regions of Bosnia both threw out the Vance-Owen Plan agreed to by Milosevic and Karadzic. Never mind that Milosevic's promise to impose sanctions on the Bosnian Serbs remained a dead letter because of his refusal to allow the UN to monitor the Serbian-Bosnian border. Never mind that for all this talk of peace the dismemberment of Bosnia continued apace. The bombings threatened by Clinton were never intended to get the Vance-Owen Plan implemented, nor were they meant to save lives in Bosnia. Their real purpose was to see if Milosevic would jump into a line - a test he passed with flying colours.

When the US is really serious about bombing somewhere, it just goes right ahead and bombs it - as defiant Somali warlords were the latest to learn in June. So if Milosevic is safe from US bombs for as long as he doesn't overstep the line drawn by the US around Macedonia, does he face a challenge from any other quarter?

SANCTIONS

Sanctions imposed in May 1992 after the start of the siege of Sarajevo seem to have hit the Serbian economy hard. Since then (depending on which figures you choose to believe), industrial output has dropped by 40 or 70%, unemployment or short-time working now affects between 40 and 65% of the workforce, and the annual inflation rate is running anything from 4,400 to 9,000%.

Milosevic's attempt, at the end of April, to blame Serbia's economic plight on the intransigence of the Bosnian Serbs wasn't too convincing, given his own role in nurturing that intransigence in the firstplace, but it did perhaps indicate an awareness that there could be a limit to the sacrifices the Serbs will make for the sake of Milosevic's vision of Greater Serbia.

According to one report, the number of draft-dodgers who evaded the call-up to the Serb army during 1990-92 numbered around 300,000 (Independent on Sunday 23.5.93). There are also many deserters. These are faint glimmers of hope, as was the one day strike organised by trade unions in Serbia on 26 March, "in protest at what, for most workers, has been a catastrophic fall in living standards since the Yugoslav wars broke out in June 1991. The unions estimated that the average Serbian salary had fallen from the equivalent of $350 (ú233) in late 1991 to $18 last January." (Independent 27.3.93).
The Sarajevo daily newspaper Oslobodjenje has said: "It is wrong to claim that Serbs, Croats and Muslims oppose one another in Sarajevo. Wrong to say that this

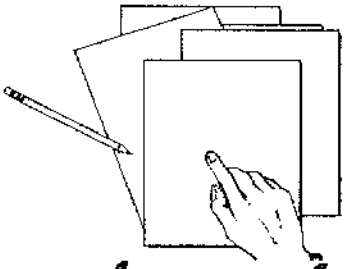
is some kind of religious conflict. And wrong too, to call it a civil war. The truth is that the inhabitants of Sarajevo are united against those seeking to destroy a civilisation and to place the Nation above Man" (5.4.93).

Such glimpses of `inter-ethnic' solidarity, still evident even in the midst of the most gruesome bloodletting, offer a few shreds of encouragement for the future - though simple anti-racism should not be mistaken for the working class solidarity which offers the only real escape from the present horrors in Yugoslavia. Even in the midst of Oslobodjenje's seemingly noble sentiments, the reference to "those seeking to destroy a civilisation" betrays a view of the war as a struggle between cultured urban cosmopolitans and backward rural barbarians. We should not be slow to condemn all `solutions' to the Yugoslav `crisis' which, while appearing to reject one particularly vicious set of divisions, only prepare the way for splitting us up on some other basis.

July 1993

Serbia's Most Unruly Chetnik?

* Incidentally, where we write about Bosnian "Muslims", or for that matter "Serbs" and "Croats", we use these labels in the same sense that we might write about "Catholics" and "Protestants" in Northern Ireland. These are not identities on which more than a small minority placed much emphasis before the present conflicts in Yugoslavia. If `national'/`religious'/`ethnic' identities have now assumed widespread importance, it is because the various factions of the ruling class in Yugoslavia have exploited these ideologies in order to mobilise the population in pursuit of their own ends.



Correspondence

We welcome letters from readers. Where possible we try to to print letters and replies in **Subversion.** Unfortunately, in this issue we have had to leave out two letters due to lack of space. We hope to include them in **Subversion 14.**

Just Workers in Uniform?

Dear Comrades,

I consider myself an anarchist comunist, but I largely agreed with your criticisms of Abraham Guillen's pamphlet. I also largely agree with you about Class War's muddled thinking.

However, I disagree with you about the armed forces. I signed away 5 years of my life to the R.A.F. I did it because of unemployment, boredom, and conflict with my parents. I soonrealised I'd made a mistake, but felt trapped.

There are an awful lot of young working class men and women who've made the same mistake as me, and for the same reasons.

As a member of the RAF I found that only officers got to fly planes. The huge majority of the R.A.F. are "ground crew" electricians, mechanics, cooks, and so on. Many of them would be glad to do a similar job in "Civvy Street" if they could find one.

I first came across the idea of anarchism when I found Kropotkin's article in the Encyclopedia Britannica in an R.A.F.library. Being increasingly mutinous against military authority, and rejecting western capitalist ideology while being repelled by Stalinism, anarchism appealed to me.

As my "bolshie" ideas developed I had some interesting discussions with other members of the R.A.F. and also with members of the Army and Navy (all volunteers like myself). From these discussions I can say that some ordinary members of the armed forces are far from the mindless agents of the ruling class you might suppose.

My view is that it is a mistake to regard all members of the armed forces as "the enemy". If that is how you treat them, that is how they will be; but it is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Much more useful to the revolution to see the armed forces as mirroring the class structure of civilian life.

I think that in a really revolutionary situation in Britain, the armed forces are likely to split at least 3 ways.

Some will be ideologically committed enemies of the revolution(We can identify officer training colleges and special forces units as likely to come into this category). Some will attempt to "stay neutral". And some will come over to our side.

There's no point directing propaganda towards the armed forces at present, we have more immediate tasks to perform. But in arevolutionary situation we should be ready to say "Brothers and sisters - don't fire on your own class - turn your guns on the real enemy"!
Dave, Montrose, Scotland.

Subversion reply:

We do not greatly disagree with this comrade, but some points should be made:

Firstly, there is a distiction between coppers and members necessarily in conflict with the working class simply by doing their day-to-day job (the sharpest expression of this conflict is of course to be found on the picket line or other locations of class conflict where the immediate and direct foe of collective working class struggle is, simply, the cops).

Secondly, however, the armed forces are often used in a similar way against class struggle (e.g. scabbing) and in these conflicts the choice is just as stark as in the case of truncheon-wielding cops on the picket line - namely, which side are you on (the principal job of the armed forces is of course to fight wars - slaughter of proletarians for the greater glory of Capital - so here are two examples of how just doing their job puts them on the wrong side of the class line in the here and now);

Thirdly, despite the above, we agree that in a revolutionary situation there will be some who come over to our side. Much more in the case of conscript armies, of course, but even with armed forces like Britain's there are some who, as the comrade says, joined for misguided reasons and regret it.
Such people who come over to our side will have an important role in helping the class to arm itself and neutralise the military advantage the ruling class has over us.

We thank the comrade for writing and welcome further letters on the question of class or anything else.

What We Stand For

We meet regularly for political discussion and to organise our activities. The following is a brief description of our basic political principles:

- We are against all forms of capitalism; private, state and self-managed.

- We are for communism, which is a classless society in which all goods are distributed according to needs and desires.

- We are actively opposed to all ideologies which divide the working class, such as religion, sexism and racism.

- We are against all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" movements such as the IRA.

- The working class (wage labourers, the unemployed, housewives, etc.) is the revolutionary class; only its struggle can liberate humanity from scarcity, war and economic crisis.

- Trade unions are part of the capitalist system, selling our labour power to the bosses and sabotaging our struggles. We support independent working class struggle, in all areas of life under capitalism, outside the control of the trade unions and all political parties.

We totally oppose all capitalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. We are against participation in fronts with these organisations.

- We are against participation in parliamentary elections; we are for the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class and the establishment of organisations of working class power.

- We are against sectarianism, and support principled co-operation among revolutionaries.

- We exist to actively particpate in escalating the class war towards communism.

Dept 10, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW

Subversion

Prisoner Support

One of the most valuable pieces of political and revolutionary work that is often ignored or neglected is prisoner support for class war and framed prisoners who are in the process of serving state inflicted isolation.

Many cases of wrongful imprisonment have recently come to light; e.g. the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six, Judith Ward etc. This prompted a government report which said that due to miscarriages of justice up to 700 people are in prison for offences that they did not commit.

On top of this are many people imprisoned for offences against property and the state, who have done nothing that a revolutionary would consider "wrong".

Isolation for a class war/framed prisoner is a very explosive situation. It creates fantasies, disillusion and paranoia. It can be combatted by groups and individuals writing to prisoners. a letter from somebody they do not know can be a breath of frsh air, a lifeline from the outside world. It shows that somebody cares.

Most prisoners will never ask for money or stamps, just letters, magazines, Christmas and birthday cards. All prisoners are grateful for these items as it keeps them in touch with the world outside.

One of the most disturbing letters that was received by a comrade of ours was by someone wrongfully convicted of murder. This is Stephen Windsor, in prison in Scotland. he has lost his friends, his wife and his children due to this miscarriage of justice.

Because Stephen has served half his sentence he is released from prison once every six weeks for the weekends. He writes, " ....I find I cannot cope now outside prison, I cannot handle crowds or loud music, discos are a no go for me. I have many difficulties now, I cannot speak to strangers, especially women, when I am released. I become two people, a prisoner for six weeks and a free man for 48 hours. When out I long to be back inside prison and that says it all."

Prisoner support is a very important political act. Any political, organisation or individualwho will not help fallen members of their class are failing in their duty.

Anybody thinking of taking up this work can contact: Manchester ABC, Box 8, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW. They will send you free of charge a magazine of wrongful or political imprisonment at home and abroad and a list of framed prisoners. Another group you can contact is CONVICTION, PO Box 522, Sheffield S1 3FF.

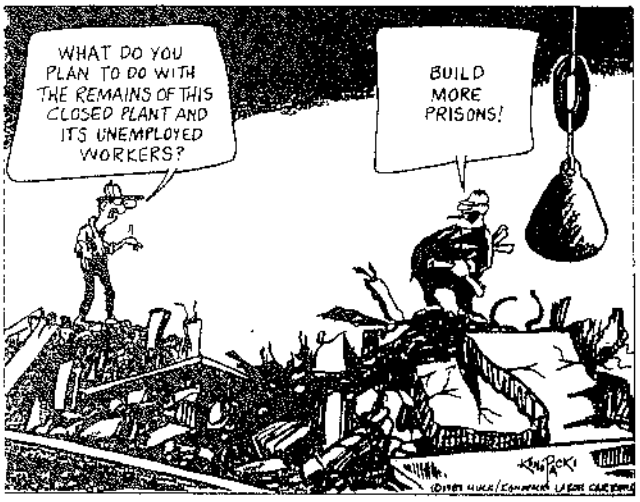
This piece of work will bear fruit and help break down barriers between our two worlds.

Publications Out Now!

Labouring in Vain - Why Labour always acts against the working class.

Nationalism and Imperialism In Ireland - The Myths Exploded.

Both pamphlets 50p including postage from **Subversion**.



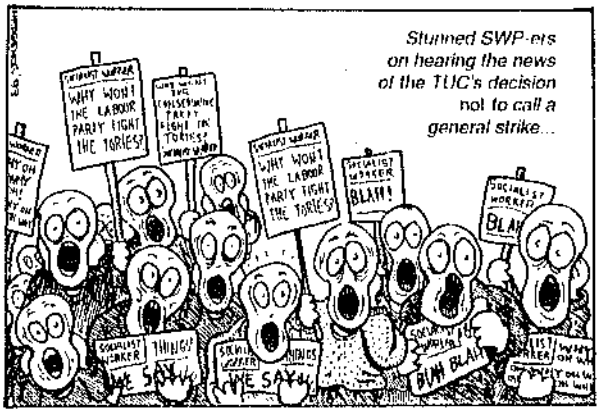
Subversion

Issue 14 FREE!

The paper that tightens the ligature round the throat of Capitalism.

Inside this issue:

The Coming War in Ireland
p3


WHY WON'T THE LABOUR PARTY FIGHT THE TORIES?
WHY WON'T THE LABOUR PARTY FIGHT THE TORIES?
SOCIALIST WORKER BLAH!
SOCIALIST WORKER BLAH!
WE SAY
WE SAY
BUM BLAH

Stunned SWP-ers on hearing the news of the TUC's decision not to call a general strike...

SWP and Militant exposed (again)
p13

Trade Unionism = Utter Cobblers! pp4,5,7

Why the Media are Bastards! p12

And More!!!

In this issue...

This issue of Subversion contains two articles arising out of the recent day school entitled 'Beyond Rank and File Trade Unionism' which was held in Manchester and sponsored jointly by **Subversion** and the **Anarchist Communist Federation.**

The article on Poland was written by one of the Subversion speakers at that day school and illustrates through a 'case study' how new and supposedly radical unions can end up as bad as the old ones.

The other article, entitled 'Rank and File Groups', was written by a comrade from Liverpool as a contribution to the discussion on how revolutionaries should organise for effective workplace struggle. We don't agree with everything in this article and will be writing more ourselves on the themes raised in a forthcoming issue of our bulletin. We would also welcome responses from our readers.

The only concern we wish to raise at this stage is what we consider to be the ill-advised and confusing use by the author of the phrase 'rank and file' to describe something other than a group subordinated to trade unionism.

Also in this issue is an article on Ireland from comrades of ours in Scotland.

Subversion welcomes articles by non-members on any subject of revolutionary or class-struggle interest. If you want to submit something, write to our box number (if possible, send on 3.5" disk, Mac or PC format).

WANT A GOOD READ?

The following journals are well worth reading. We recommend them not because we agree with everything they publish but because we find them a stimulating read and reckon you will too.

PROLETARIAN GOB A must for Guardian journalists stuck for an idea for a column. From: BM Makhno, London WC1N 3XX.

ORGANISE! Quarterly journal of the Anarchist Communist Federation. From: ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

RADICAL CHAINS Theoretical and analytical articles – critically Marxist. From: BM Radical Chains, London WC1N 3XX.

WILDCAT Calls itself 'autonomist' these days! Good article on Somalia in latest issue. From: BM Cat, London WC1N 3XX.

ECHANGES Articles on class struggle from around the world. Roughly council communist in orientation. In English and French editions, the latter usually being more up-to-date. From: Echanges, BP 241, 75866 Paris Cedex 18, France.

WORKERS' VOICE Paper of the Communist Workers Organisation. Best of the 'left communist'-type publications. From: BM Box CWO, London, WC1N 3XX.

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The Coming War in Ireland

If the IRA and the British Government are talking, it shouldn't be a surprise. As the Independent puts it, maybe IRA boss McGuinness has even met secretary of State Mayhew, or IRA "Officer Commanding Ulster" Adams has had a chinwag with MI5 boss Rimington. Top dogs have a habit of sniffing up each other's bums. They don't chum it with the great unwashed.

First, it seems pretty likely that masses of arms for the Protestant paramilitaries really were seized in the English North-East. It appears that while MI5 are backing the UDA etc. MI6 are playing their own games with Catholic Priests and Republicans. These bastards are obviously planning a treat for us.

Second, throught the 1990's. Northern business interests have increasingly realised that the profit lies in sprucing up a Belfast- Dublin axis, not in relying upon money being pumped in from London.

Third, Major's admission that his Government has no "economic strategic interest in the North should be taken as a clear case of diplomatic understatement. Obviously the Tories are cutting State spending on the mainland - students and proletarian single parents are current targets - but getting rid of Northern Ireland would save British bosses billions.

Fourth, a British pullout, other things being equal, would hit the Protestant working class worse. Quite clearly, workers a Short's and Harland & Wolff could kiss their jobs goodbye - these companies only operate on massive state susidies which neither the Republic nor a mini-State could possible provide, and the EC would be unlikely to. Civil Service and local government jobs would be likely to be cut too. It is partly because of such realities, and related tensions, that organisations like the UDA and UFF have their support.

Fifth, other things are not equal! Any British pull-out would obviously lead to full-scale war: the Protestant bigots would see to that, and without military involvement from outside Ireland right at the start the Protestant armed forces would be bound to win (they have more people under arms than the IRA and the republic put together). The immediate future would be one of a fascist Protestant mini-State with perhaps a county or two falling into the Republic but full of refugees policed, in practice, by the IRA. This would be a situation where all the capitalist forces, separately and together, ensured a crap deal for the entire working class of the region.

Sixth, factors in operation today aren't purely economic. Since 1992 the British ideology and pseudo-constitution have started to show major cracks. Monarchy, media, church, Tory Party, army: it's happening everywhere at once. The clearest-sighted scumbags in the corridors of power are obviously jockeying, plotting and getting new bullshit ready. It may take years, but who knows what horrors they'll consider to be an adequate preliminary to the new order?

In Ireland, meanwhile, the 1990'S have already seen the legalisation of divorce and homosexuality. It certainly looks as though the conflict between Catholic reaction and Catholic liberalism will come to head here before it breaks into a confrontation globally.

Quite possibly, the British and Irish governments are getting together to start a war which they'll then both revel in for internal reasons. It'd cer-tainly be a bowl of cherries for intelligence services and arms companies. When rulers talk of peace they're often already preparing for war. Perhaps Britain will have a war even without pulling out.

Seventh, like all capitalist wars, an Irish war would be the application of mass murder to keep working class people divided amongst themselves but united around the flags of competing groups of capitalist gangsters. The obvious contemporary parallel is Yugoslavia, which has similar religious aspects.

One might hope that working-class people would respond by fighting back against all the paramilitary rackets, business interests and religious leaders together but only an arsehole would consciously seek war in the first place so that people might learn from it.

Eighth, the working class has suffered so much during nearly 30 years of so-called "Troubles", but what is necessary only seems impractical because it is unlikely to happen in the forseeable future: namely, an escape from the straightjackets of the "two communities", independence from any kind of "community leader" or God-pusher and the united assertion of working class interests throughout the North, Ireland, the British Isles, Europe and the World

The working class, as a class, isn't yet a major player. If it were, it would be able to guarantee no war. Unfotunately, though, this isn't the case. People are just waiting.

Meanwhile, it is certainly exciting for TV-watching ghouls elsewhere: if an all-Ireland referendum ever gets held, it could go right to the wire, especially if a change has to be backed by 50% of the electorate. Since, according to the Irish Times, two-thirds of Northern Catholics would vote against a united Ireland, there would have to be a high turnout of X-marking sheep in favour of it in the Republic if more than half the electorate are to back it. The role of the pope in such a situation (whether Wojtyla or Hume) could be even more crucial than that of the Kennedys and the White House. Clinton might be looking to force a vote, but it might not go the way he wants. What about the 8 million people in Britain entitled to Irish passports? And so on.

All of this, of course, will be worked out secretly before being played out publicly, and it is in the nature of a plebiscite that it does not actually decide anything. We only hope that war is not on the secret agenda.

The above article was reproduced (and slightly adapted) from a leaflet produced by some autonomous proletarians in central Scotland.

Ireland - Nationalism and Imperialism.
The myths exploded

A pamphlet by Subversion.

Send 50p including postage and packing.

Flame or Ember?

Class struggle in Europe.

Revolutionaries in Britain have witnessed the defeat of a number of important working class struggles over the last 10 years followed by a rising tide of nationalism and racism across the globe. In this situation they are understandably desperate for some good news. Articles have appeared in a number of publications heralding a resurgence of class struggle across Europe, supposedly throwing a beacon of light to militants here in our efforts to promote a fight back against the current bosses' offensive.

FLASH POINTS

There have certainly been by comparison some impressive flash points in the European class struggle over recent months. Massive street demonstrations involving between 50,000 and 500,000 workers have taken place in Italy, Belgium, Germany and Spain against government austerity plans, redundancies and wage cuts. There have been angry and violent strikes at Air France and the state chemical company in Crotone, Italy, involving confrontations with armed police. Major strikes have also taken place amongst coal and steel workers in Germany at the heart of European capitalism. There have also been numerous smaller strikes right across Europe, east and west. Whilst all of this can only warm our hearts, there are serious worries in our heads at least, about the way things are going.

AIR FRANCE

There have been suggestions that the bosses deliberately provoked the strike at Air France with a carefully-timed announcement of huge redundancies well in excess of those actually required at the present time, with the hope that the workers would be isolated and exhausted before a more general assault on the rest of the class. If this is true then the bosses probably got more than they bargained for. Certainly the Financial Times was sufficiently worried to bemoan the lack of trade union control over its members at Air France and to express concern over spreading militancy amongst European workers generally.

GERMANY AND COAL

It is noticeable, however, that the strongest opposition to austerity in Europe comes from workers in the substantial state-owned industrial and public service sectors which have generally still to see the level of restructuring and job losses experienced by those sectors in this country.

Although strikes amongst German coal miners have sometimes been 'spontaneous' and organised outside the official unions, they have quickly been brought under those unions' control. Ideologically they have been sidetracked into nationalism and corporatism (i.e. identifying with the industry rather than the wider working class) with slogans such as 'Defend German Coal'.

Struggles have been isolated with the focus on occupations of pits threatened with closure and token union-led demonstrations. There are many echoes here of the British NUM's defence of the 'Plan for Coal', its appeal for moral support from the 'general public', MPs, etc, and insistence on getting every last miner out on strike, which prevented miners from spreading their struggle directly to other workers in the crucial early stages of the strike. There was also much wasted and misdirected debate over capitalist issues such as which energy industries did, or should, get the most state subsidies. As a result of all this the British miners for all their militancy and courage were roundly defeated.

ITALY AND THE SCHOOLS

In Italy the 'base committees' (COBAS) had some success in organising struggles of workers, mainly in the state sector, outside and against the traditional union structures. They continue to have some influence but even here corporatist tendencies have appeared. For instance, in the schools COBAS there have been attempts to sidetrack the movement into 'advising' the government on how schooling should be planned, making the COBAS look inward towards the needs of capitalist schooling rather than outward towards the rest of the class and class-based needs. It seems that 'professionalism' for long such a barrier to 'class' resistance amongst school workers in Britain is still a force amongst such workers in Italy, despite their comparatively more militant stance.

ITALY – SCOTLAND

There are some other unhealthy comparisons to be made. The extremely militant strike and occupation of the Crotone chemical plant in southern Italy which received the enthusiastic support of the whole town bears a number of similarities to the failed Timex strike in Dundee, Scotland:
– considerable militancy and initiative on the ground by the workers involved, but links with the 'outside' world largely left in the hands of the official unions and parties etc
– the blurring of class lines between the workers and their families on the one hand and local politicians, churchmen and capitalists on the other in 'defence' of 'their' area
– an element of 'north' versus 'south' ideology particularly strong in Italian politics today comparable to the Scotland versus England debate here, setting workers in one region against workers in another region

CONCLUSION

Clearly there has been an upturn in the European class struggle and there exists a huge wellspring of class anger beneath the surface that could give rise to even larger struggles in the near future. The obstacles to such a movement are however very great.

Unlike the left our conclusions are that, at this juncture, we in Britain have less to learn from the supposed 'successes' of workers in the rest of Europe, than they have to learn from our failures.

(See the article on Timex in the last Subversion and the article on Crotone in Workers' Voice 69. For more information on the COBAS, see the pamphlet by David Brown, 'The Cobas: Italy 1986–88: A New Rank and File Movement', published by Echanges, address given elsewhere in this bulletin)

Subversion

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Beyond Rank and Vile Trade Unionism

First it is necessary to spell out what we do not mean - that is the myth of a 'rank and file' straining at the leash, only held back by a cunning and devious trade union bureaucratised leadership. Today it is obvious such a movement does not exist, but it is doubtful if in reality this ever was the case except for a brief period after the First World War. There have been rank and file groupings in many industries and unions, but except for isolated instances and in very specific circumstances they have not challenged the outlook or mentality of conventional trade unionism. So first we have to establish to some extent what constitutes a genuine challenge to existing trade unionism rather than merely a 'loyal opposition' to existing workers organisations. (In this regard we do not refer merely to the existing trade unions - but to the whole outlook and philosophy of what is known as ' the Labour Movement'.)

Today our contention is that what passes for the 'Labour Movement' is entirely reactionary. We do not mourn its passing, but wish to point out the necessity of recognising this reality. Everything that has in the past been presented as the socialist project is now revealed as part of capitalism's management of its crisis. All that has hitherto been assumed as being in the workers interests - the welfare state, post war consensus politics, the commitment to 'full employment' is now revealed as merely the result of the old movements' politics to tie us more closely to the system.

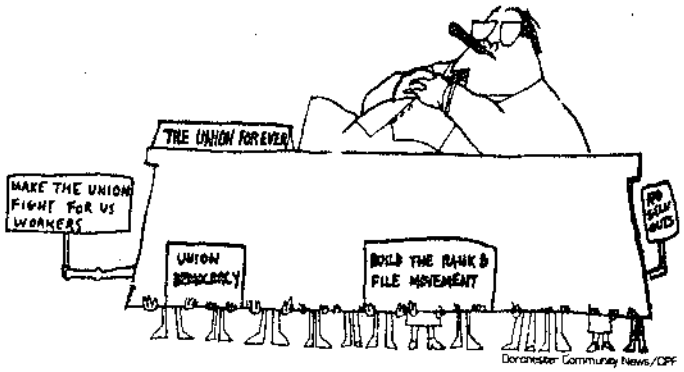
As such it must be rejected.

Workers Movement versus the Movement of the Workers

Now this might seem a rather pessimistic conclusion, but we believe it is as well to start off from a realistic appreciation of the situation so that anyone proposing either to start a 'rank and file ' grouping or faced with one already in existence can begin to arrive at some kind of analysis of what they are doing. In our experience there has been and is far too much uncritical action simply for actions sake . We want to avoid the situation where militants end up isolated, left only to protest futilely at the latest 'betrayal' or even worse in the name of some mythical 'unity' obliged to present the latest stitch up between management and unions as some kind of 'victory'. Much of the present disorientation amongst the working class is not the result of the 'Thatcher revolution' (which we are convinced will soon be revealed as nothing of the sort,) but of the fact that a sea change has taken place in politics internationally and the old certainties (held in place by the Cold War) have gone. The traditional institutions that the working class looked to for help in times past, principally the Unions and the Labour Party, are now revealed for what they are - pillars of the system and defenders of the status quo.

We propose to look at 'rank and file' groups under five main headings which although they are treated separately here for the purposes of analysis are in fact inter-dependent and inter-related. It is our view that we are working towards a coherent outlook, and one of the main purposes of attending this conference is not only to broaden

and deepen our own understanding but to see if what we have worked out strikes a chord with other participants or even if someone else has arrived at a better understanding than ourselves. However it would not be correct to give the impression necessarily that we are prepared to give up on what we have fought so hard to understand. For instance our understanding of the place of trade unions in capitalist society or the role of the Labour Party is not something we are prepared to compromise.


THE UNION FOREVER
MAKE THE UNION FIGHT FOR US WORKERS
UNION DEMOCRACY
BUILD THE RANK & FILE MOVEMENT
Doncaster Community News/CPF

That being said our five headings are as follows:-

* The Distinction between Minority and Mass (or majority organisations)

* A 'rank and file' populism against the development of a coherent political understanding and outlook (or reformism versus revolution)

* The relationship between rank and file organisations and the existing trade union structure

* The question of the creation of permanent institutions of a rank and file nature.

* The relationship (if any) of rank and file movements to political parties

(i) The distinction between minority and mass organisations

In modern capitalist society mass organisations of a genuinely representative type **no longer exist**. It is inconceivable that we will witness a rebirth of trade unions as mass organisations. It would be as well to remember that the original founding of trade unions in this country was by minorities of skilled craftsmen. Mass unionism is very much a product of modern society and modern unions owe their structure and organisation to the post Second World War consensus which is now breaking up.

In this situation it would be as well for rank and file movements to recognise their necessarily **minority** character, rather than pretending to speak for the amorphous mass of workers. If this is the case then they have no need to hold back or pretend that initially at least they are anything other than **political** organisations pursuing a particular programme. It therefore makes no sense to hide this political character rather it should be openly acknowledged. Moreover it is our view that such movements will be obliged to take on an increasingly social dimension. It is no longer possible to maintain the old social - democratic split between 'political' and 'economic' questions on which the Labour Party was founded.

This leads us directly on to our second heading concerning the question of populism versus a coherent political outlook

(ii) Reform versus Revolution

In the past we have had cause to question what we termed ' money militancy.' By this we meant that whatever reforms we won in terms of money or working conditions, **of necessity**, such 'victories' always turned out to be short lived. Inflation always ate away at our gains. We always found ourselves in a minority shouting about a 'betrayal' - but if the union demands £10 should a revolutionary policy be to demand £20 ? Today although it is possible that a new wages movement might emerge, we doubt that it could achieve even the modest gains which were so easily wiped away in the 70s. So around what practical programme could a rank and file movement emerge ?

Today the system itself constantly proposes reforms with which it hopes to draw in any opposition, so what attitude should a rank and file movement take to this process. Our answer to this is to reject the whole project for reforming the system and to argue for its abolition. This is not to dismiss anyone who finds themselves drawn into existing organisations - it is above all a **practical** question. In the past socialist groupings had to come to practical decisions on this point . The pre First World War SLP actually forbad its members from taking up union positions - again this leads us directly onto our next point, the relationship of any rank and file movement to the existing trade unions.

(iii) 'Rank and File ' and the existing Trade Unions

It should be fairly clear by now that we see **no role** for the trade unions in any future struggle. We do not want to make a fetish of this, it obviously depends on circumstances. But even where a movement utilises the existing union base machinery (for example combine committees, or local area committees) and it is looked on favourably by the local trade union bureaucracy (as regards funds, premises, printing facilities and so on) at crucial moments (that is the only ones that matter) this dependence will be the undoing of the movement. A classic example of this was the London Busmen's Combined Committee broken by Bevin and the TGWU in 1937.

Not only therefore do we see no positive role for the trade unions, but we believe of necessity that any rank and file movement can only emerge in **opposition** to them. This has been the experience abroad and especially we believe in Italy with the COBAS movement. Indeed in our opinion it is a good sign of the health of such a movement to see how much opposition from the existing unions it inspires. It also follows therefore that all attempts at democratising the unions or pressurising union leaderships to take action are futile and a waste of time and indeed positively **reactionary.**

iv) Permanent Organisation ?

We have shown how it is impossible for new mass organisations to emerge except at times of exceptional crisis (indeed one of the ways you know you are in a crisis is the practical question of the emergence of such institutions). In our view it would be a mistake to try and artificially prolong the life of such organisations outside periods of struggle by making them permanent. If we accept that movements ebb and flow, that disputes are going to be resolved on whatever terms at least temporarily, then the need for a fighting organisation fades away. Any attempt to artificially prolong it risks ossifying it at best and at worst turning it into a fully fledged capitalist organisation (by obliging it to maintain itself with finance,

permanent staff or the usual risk with working class organisations - the treasurer runs off with the funds)

Prior to the dockers attempts to take over (by joining 'en masse') the 'blue' union (NASD) in the 1950s, rank and file organisation was kept alive as a **political** idea not by any organisational device. It was only the fact that some dockers influenced by Trotskyism wanted to take over a union (and ultimately to have some influence over the Labour Party itself) that made them believe that they could 'take shelter' under the umbrella of the NASD.

(v) **Relationship to Political Parties**

If you're not part of the solution then you must be part of the problem !

We have said already that any rank and file movement is by its nature the organisation of a **political minority.** How then does it differ from any one of the different Leftist groups which are also political minorities?

Only in the ways we which we have already outlined. We have already stated our views on the old 'Labour Movement', and as there are not many leftist groups which would subscribe to them so they are almost automatically excluded.

If only life were so simple!

Apart from those movements which are merely fronts for already established parties - a genuine rank and file movement would begin by trying to outgrow its sectional roots, by breaking out of the limitations that capitalist society imposes on it and become **social** in character. Other political groupings, who of course it is **impossible** to exclude from such a development either help or hinder such a process.

Graham

Labouring in Vain

Why Labour is not a Socialist Party

A pamphlet by Subversion, send 50p, including postage and packing.

Solidarnosc

Ruling class solidarity against the working class

B Borowik for The People

The 1980 workers' uprising in Poland was not the first time the working class there had fought back against state capitalism. In 1956, 1970 and 1976 workers had taken to the streets when the state had tried to impose cuts in their standard of living by raising food prices.

The strength of the working class was such that, despite severe repression, in each case the state gave in. These uprisings underlined the fact that there was a line beyond which the state could not go at that time. They also meant that the state was forced to constantly rethink its strategies for increasing the competitiveness of Polish capital. The state's solution to the 1970 revolt was to try to modernise the economy by importing western capital and technology. This was to be paid for by exploiting the peasantry in order to subsidise the money wages of the workers with cheap food. After 1976 the idea of autonomy for enterprise management was introduced. This was to prove crucial in the early stages of 1980.

Despite their best efforts, the Polish state built up a huge debt to western banks by 1980 of approximately $28 billion. It's response was to try to cut the subsidies to workers and on June 30th announced a "reorganisation of meat distribution", which meant a 60% increase in the price of meat.

The working class responded with a wave of strikes effecting factories in Ursus (tractors), Huta Warzawa (steel), Poznan (metallurgy), Tczew (transmissions), Mielec (aviation) and Swidnica (aviation).

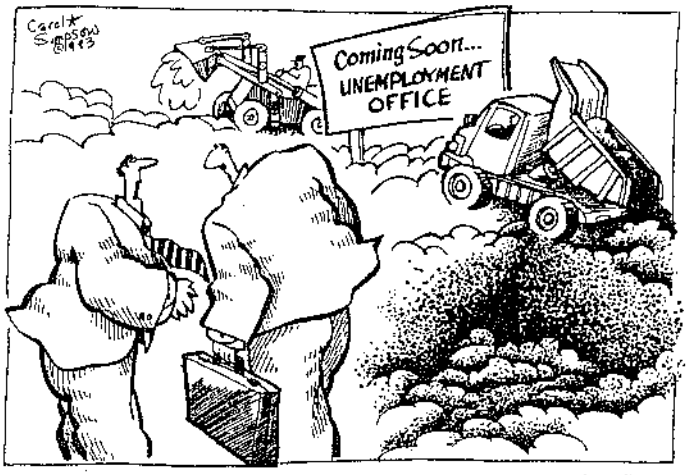
The party's response was to try to negotiate locally. They couldn't risk losing the goodwill of the West, nor risk a major disruption of production which would endanger its ability to service the massive foreign debt. The policy of local enterprise autonomy made this policy easier to put into practice. The hope was that it would keep workers divided. The result was the exact opposite. Workers in other plants saw their fellows winning demands and immediately went on strike themselves! They took the opportunity to elect strike committees and organise themselves. By July 15th there were 50 strikes going on. Two days later the city of Lublin, with a population of 300,000 started a general strike.

Even at this stage there was a major change with previous uprisings. In earlier years workers had taken to the streets, this time they remained in their workplaces to avoid being gunned down. They remained where they were strong and united.

The strike wave continued until early August. At this point the state decided on a new approach. If the carrot had failed, now they would go back to trying the stick. The problem they faced was in finding who to repress. These strikes were examples of workers organising themselves. There were no obvious leaders who had instigated it, nor easy targets to pick on. There were underground groups and "free trade unionists", but they had not played a central role in the struggle up to this point. Failing anyone else to repress, the state turned on these people.

Repression started on August 11th when a bin man was arrested for 9 hours. Two days later, 3 Lenin

Shipyard workers connected with underground unions were arrested. Up to this point, Gdansk, Sopot and Gdnyia (the centres of the shipbuilding industry) had been mostly quiet. The result was a general strike that spread rapidly from shipyard to city. A strike committee of 10 was elected (including Lech Walesa who had climbed over the wall when the strike broke out) which was soon joined by 100 delegates from other departments. They published a list of demands, some of which were economic, some political.



"Another sign of a surging economy—new construction."
CAROL SIMPSON

By 18th August 100 enterprises in a 100km area around Gdansk were on strike. An inter factory strike committee (the MKS) was set up with two delegates from each factory on strike. The MKS controlled the entire region and resolved all problems of food and transportation.

MKS were set up in Szczecin and the Silesian mines. The strike wave had spread all over Poland, accompanied by self-organisation of the working class that was challenging the authority of the state in a way that had never happened before in Poland or most of Europe. But it also contained the seeds of its own destruction. Soon the strike wave was to be hijacked by those with quite specific objectives that turned out to be against those of the workers.

ENTER THE KOR.

The repression that followed 1976 led a group of intellectuals to set up a Committee for defence Against Repression, the KOR. This was to provide legal defence for those in need and material support for families. It was to become an important centre of opposition to the Communist Party (PUWP). It was soon joined by supporters of free trade unions. The political objectives of the KOR and the free unions were to liberalise the Polish state and to make Polish capital more competitive. These objectives can be summed up by quoting from the founding charter of underground unions in Northern Poland drawn up in April 1978. It stated:

"Only free unions and associations can save the state, since only democratisation can lead to the integration of the interests and the will of the citizen and the interests and power of the state."

Lech Walesa was one of the signatories of this charter. Supporters of KOR had a lot of respect in Poland. They endured state repression and carried on their work. There is no denying that they were brave men and women. It is right to deny that their objectives coincided with the needs of the working class.

They had little role in the early days of the uprising. Ironically it was the state which turned them into its leaders. Looking for someone to pick on, it was supporters of KOR that they found. This reinforced the idea that they were the state's strongest opponents, so workers looking for new ideas increasingly turned to them for leadership. Thus it was that Walesa got elected to the strike committee at Gdansk, even though he did not work in the shipyard he represented. Other oppositionists became members of the MKS Praesidium on the basis of their being experienced negotiators.

NEGOTIATIONS

The original demands of the Gdansk strikers were as political as they were economic. They contained all sorts of mystifications about democracy, free elections and judicial independence, but nonetheless their central thrust was simple - to get rid of the Communist regime in Poland. This terrified the oppositionists. Bogdan Borusewicz, a leader of KOR in Gdansk said: "Asking for pluralist elections is maximalism. If the Party gave in, Moscow would intervene. there must be no demands which either force the government to resort to violence or lead to its collapse. It was the ending of censorship that led to intervention in Prague. We must leave them some exits." By the time the demands had been finalised, the KOR had got their way. The state would be allowed a way out.

The government realised that it had to negotiate. On September 1st the Gdansk Accords were signed. Lech Walesa immediately called for a return to work. He said:

"The strike is over. We did not get everything we wanted, but we did get all that was possible in the current situation. We will win the rest later because we now have the essentials: the right to strike and independent unions."

Kuron, an important KOR leader, said: "The unions ought to be partners in the administration protectors of the workers."

Work resumed. The MKS at Gdnask and Szczezin formed themselves into branches of Solidarnosc. By the end of the month it represented 90% of the workers in Poland.

UNION AGAINST THE WORKERS

What was really amazing was just how quickly Solidarnosc began to act like established trade unions in the West. Its leaders quickly get themselves into positions of being intermediaries between the workers and the state. In the guise of "representing" the working class they went around stopping strikes, toning down wage and other demands in the interests of "national unity". As early as September 16th, Solidarnosc in Gdansk warned against wildcat strikes - even though it was these same strikes that had started the uprising just two months before!

The Gdansk Accords had left unsettled the workers economic demands. Very important amongst these was the right to not work on Saturdays. There were many strikes in the winter of 1980-81 over this. The Solidarity National Coordinating Committee issued a statement on January 28th asking branches not to call any more strikes. Walesa said:

"The situation is dangerous. We need national unity. To achieve it, we, government and workers, ought to seek a common path: we should unite in the country's interests. We extend our hand to the government."

The government again tried repression as a tactic. After a particularly nasty incident at Bydgoszcz in March, Solidarity was

forced to do something when some of its organisers were beaten up by the militia. They called for a token 2 hour work stoppage. When the government refused to yield, Solidarnosc called for a general strike on March 31. In the best tradition of union bosses, Walesa negotiated with the state, got a few minor concessions and called the strike off without consulting anyone.

A pattern was beginning to emerge. Faced with pressure from the working class, Solidarnosc called for token strikes, did deals and called off strikes. A common spectacle was Walesa flying round the country in a government helicopter telling workers to go back to work.

However, the strikes continued. October and November 1981 saw the beginning of street demonstrations which the union could not control. By the middle of November there were more than 400,000 wildcat strikers in Poland.

After its September and October Congress, Solidarnosc started to make political demands of the state. It wanted to move towards Poland becoming a western style democracy, so it could operate as a western style trade union. Having lost much of their political control over their members, Solidarnosc's leaders hoped that such reforms would enable them to regain it.

The state could not permit such a challenge to its authority. Solidarnosc was useful when it could control the working class. Faced with a working class outside its control the state called upon the Polish military to take over and reestablish order. In 1980 the military, faced with a united and confident working class, and trusting in the Party's ability to rule, had been unwilling and unable to do this. Fourteen month's of Solidarnosc's malign influence had undermined the unity of the working class, at the same time as the Party had lost its legitimacy and ability to govern. The army took over in the first military coup in a state capitalist country. Workers fought back but were put down ruthlessly by the army. Many were given long prison sentences, others killed. Walesa was put into "preventative custody". Clearly he was not someone who should be dealt with too harshly. Maybe they saw him as a person they would need to deal with in the future.

HOW DID IT ALL HAPPEN?

It is too easy to look at the Polish uprising as being a simple case of good workers against bad bureaucrats. We have tried to show that the aims and activities of Walesa, the Solidarnosc bureaucracy and the KOR were against the interests of the working class. They were able to substitute their own agenda for that of the working class. What we have not tried to show is that the working class were champing at the bit for revolution in 1980 and only held back by the bureaucrats. Such a view, favoured by many, pays no regard to reality.

The uprising was a result of the self-organisation of the working class. It wasn't the result of any planning by underground bodies. The initial objectives of the working class were economic, but we have seen how many workers had political objectives which included getting rid of the Stalinist state.

However, most workers saw Solidarnosc as being their own creation. Even after a year of backstabbing, Solidarnosc had a membership comprising 90% of the Polish working class. There was a very real tension between the centre and the branches, with rank and file members pushing demands forward, fighting for them and then the centre acting to diffuse the situation. Within the branches there was still a healthy tendency to struggle which had not at this stage succumbed to the ideology of trade unionism. It was the failure of the bureaucrats to gain control of the branches that led the army to seize control in the end.

It is hardly surprising that for many workers Solidarnosc was a creation they supported. For years they had been fighting against the Polish state. Each time they rose up their gains were snatched back. They were looking for something that would guarantee their gains. Because they knew no different, they believed that free unions were the answer. What they had in mind was the kind of idealised conception of unions that keeps workers supporting them throughout the world. If workers here, who have years of experience of sell-outs still support the unions, is it surprising that Polish workers should see them as an advance?

Further, Polish workers knew that they were on their own. There were no similar actions in other parts of the Soviet bloc, and especially no similar activity in the USSR itself. They knew that if they pushed too far the result could only be Soviet intervention and massacre. This situation was made worse by a strong nationalist tendency which saw the situation as being a purely "Polish" one. Active revolutionaries would have tried to spread the struggle as internationally as possible.

LESSONS

Any attempt by workers to set up permanent organisations to negotiate with the state and employers will eventually go the same way as Solidarnosc. Trying to fulfil that role immediately raises questions of reaching compromises, doing deals, seeing the other side's point of view. For workers that means accepting speed ups, productivity deals, lower living standards, job cuts and so on. It means accepting the boss's right to own and control the means of production.

The logic of class struggle is the opposite of this. It questions the right of the boss to manage and ultimately brings into question who controls society. It is clear to us that the only way forward for our class is to get rid of the whole buying and selling system and the state and bosses who go with it.

Despite the failure of the workers in Poland, despite their setting up of Solidarnosc, their uprising shows us many positive things.

It shows us that even in the most unlikely of situations, up against ruthless enemies, the working class is capable of fighting hard and taking on the enemy. The way they organised themselves, in their strike committees and the ways their delegates reported their deliberations were an example for others.
It shows the limits of struggles within national borders and the need to spread the struggle internationally. When our class is united and the struggle is international, there is nothing that can not be accomplished.e is international, there is nothing that cannot be accomplished.

Coming Soon!

The Best of Subversion

A collection of articles from the first eleven issues of Subversion.

An excellent introduction to our politics.

Letters

(The following letters were unavoidably held over for a couple of issues. We apologise for the delay).

Equal wages?

Dear Comrades,

In your review of Abraham Guillen's Anarchist Economics, you describe your own preferred economic system as 'centralised planning by delegate bodies' without 'private property, money, wages and markets'.

No doubt you are sincere in your ideological opposition to state capitalism. However in practice the sort of economy you wish to construct would create the same problems of poverty and shortages that existed in the old state capitalist economies of the Eastern bloc.

The reason for this is your commitment to central planning. In a market system variations in profits and prices send signals to enterprises which tell them which products consumers want and which processes are most efficient. How could delegate bodies posssibly gather together all the information necessary to match scarce resources with consumer demand without market prices to act as indicators. Milions upon millions of variables are involved. No computer imaginable could do this, especially as it would be issuing orders not to robots but to people who have to have their subjective feelings and opinions considered if a workable production plan is to be made.

Under state capitalism economic variables were not processed efficiently hence the shortage and waste that the system produced.

Socialists must build a system that combines the use of market prices as indicators with social ownership of the means of production and equality.

This is possible both in principle and practice. Though Guillen himself believes that people should be rewarded according to the 'quality and quantity' of work performed he also shows how during the Spanish revolution people were paid equal wages in many areas where there was an anarchist influence. The post-revolutionary spirit of solidarity inspired them to work hard.

In a revolutionary society profits could be used as an indicator of efficiency and the satisfaction of demand without being paid to workers as an incentive. Profits could be paid into a fund for investment or redistribution to all. Workers would respond to profit indicators because of a socially motivated desire to work well, rather than competitive pressure. Workers could be directed to work in the most efficient enterprises. Again solidarity rather than the ability of these enterprises to pay more would be the incentive.

Under capitalism the uncoordinated nature of investment leads to the cycle of boom and recession. In a socialist system as long as one knew which were the most efficient, profitable enterprises, one could get them all to invest more and therefore create full employment at the same time as ensuring they were performing worthwhile activities.

It would be possible therefore to combine socialist aims with more effective means than central planning.

Jacob, a supporter of anarchism.

SUBVERSION REPLIES: You rightly say that state capitalism produced poverty, shortages and waste. But this wasn't because of central planning in itself, nor because state capitalist economies supposedly lacked price and profit mechanisms. The 'planned economies' of the former Russian bloc were essentially attempting to plan the market (we went into this in more detail in an article in Subversion no.8). They retained price and profit mechanisms at the level of the economy as a whole. This is one of the reasons why we can describe them as a form of capitalism - state capitalism.

The presence of prices and profits has not prevented 'free market' capitalism in the West from displaying the same defects as state capitalism in the East. In fact, you could say that these features are the cause of these defects.

We are well aware of the marvellous powers attributed to the market in the realms of economic theory. But out here in the real world, you only have to look around you to see that "the use of market prices" is a very poor way of gathering information about people's needs. Do homeless people not need houses? Do starving people not need food? Of course they do. But because they have no money, they cannot "indicate" or "signal" their needs in a system where everything is produced to be bought and sold via the market. The flipside of this poverty is the waste of resources when goods are stockpiled or destroyed because the capitalists cannot sell them at a profitable price. This is why, when we are describing socialism, we say that goods must be produced to directly satisfy our needs, without the mediation of money, prices or the market.

You should think again about profits, and exactly what sort of "efficiency" they measure. Since profits arise from the unpaid labour of the working class, the most profitable enterprises must be those which are most "efficient" at screwing surplus value out of the workers. Whenever workers are sacked, or our wages are cut, or we have to work harder or for longer hours, isn't it more often than not in the name of "profits" and "efficiency"? Is this really what you want to carry over from capitalism into socialism?

When we advocate central planning, we are not saying that all decisions will be taken at a global level (though some will). Most issues will easily be able to be sorted out at various intermediate stages - regional, local, community, etc. Viewing things on this scale, we honestly don't see what will stop people getting together to determine their needs and the best ways to go about satisfying them. And if we do encounter any difficulties, we certainly won't solve them by resurrecting some of the features of the old system we'll just have overthrown.

We have many reasons for hating capitalism. Here are just a few of them...Because we can only gain access to the means of existence by selling our labour power (the wage system). Because the bosses grow fat on the fruits of our labour which they rob from us (the profit system). Because we are constantly denied the things we need and want because we can't afford them (the price system). Now tell us what it is that you hate about capitalism, because frankly we can't tell the difference between the "socialism" you propose and the very system we are out to destroy.

Back issues

If you want to receive free copies of back issues, just write to our Manchester address.

Who are you, anyway?

Dear Subversion,
There are a couple of questions I would like answered:

1. Is it correct to assume that no one associated with Subversion is, or could be, a member of a trade union.
2. Having read your column of aims and principles there doesn't seem to be anything new. So how come you claim to be leaving the rest of us (revolutionary anarchists /anarcho-syndicalists) behind? What is it precisely that you are advocating apart from council communism?

for solidarity, mutual aid and direct action.

R. Avon.

SUBVERSION REPLIES:

Dear Roy,

You raised two points. The first was the old thorny union question.

The first thing we would say is that unions do not exist to unite workers. They divide them into different sectors and groups. They then set about pitting the "interests" of one group against the "interests" of another. So we see union bureaucrats trading off jobs for pay, or trying to persuade bosses to make one group redundant instead of another. This is the inevitable consequence of setting themselves up as permanent organisations to negotiate with the bosses, which inevitably means accepting the logic of capitalism and the rights of the employer to hire/fire and make a profit. It is fair to say that this is true for all unions everywhere, whether they be traditional or syndicalist. We don't think that even One Big Union would make any difference. It would still have to negotiate with the bosses within the framework of capitalism. It would still end up their partner in the exploitation of the working class. We plan to deal with this in detail, in a later issue of Subversion.

Most of the members of Subversion who are in work do belong to trade unions. We do this for a number of reasons. One is that they provide certain basic legal protections at work. Another is reason is that, at least in Britain, most discussion about collective action takes place initially at union meetings. It would be difficult to discuss with fellow workers by shouting from the outside.

The whole point for revolutionaries is not to accept this starting point as the end. Any major struggle that remains within the confines of a union will inevitably be defeated. Indeed our personal experiences only reinforces this point. Every struggle we have been involved with has pitted us as much against the union as the bosses. What workers need to do is to break out of union imposed isolation, link up to other groups and spread the struggle.

However, being well aware of the nature of the unions as an integrated part of the management of capitalism, none of our members are paid officials or hold positions on union committees and the like. To do so would mean not only representing the wishes of fellow workers, but of representing the union to workers. As it is this second activity that is so often in conflict with the interests of working class people we feel that it is incompatible with being a revolutionary.

We know that this can pose a dilemma for revolutionaries. At times some of our members have held positions as local reps, simply to get meetings organised.

We would agree with you that there is little new in our What We Stand For statement. That is because we think they represent the minimum points for agreement between revolutionaries. Our point is not that we are leaving others behind. We do do something that many others don't or can't do. We write and produce a fairly regular bulletin which we hope is fairly readable. And apart from the SPGB, we are the only group in Manchester who organise meetings to discuss revolutionary politics. We do this to spread socialist ideas and hopefully along the way to bring people round to our viewpoint. But our viewpoint is not unique. We think it is a revolutionary communist one. As such it is shared by many who call themselves anarchists, council communists and marxists.

We believe that these days these labels have little of value to offer. Many who historically called themselves marxists turned into statist monsters, many anarchists either became "marxists" or idiotic liberals. The point is that they all ended up pro-capitalist. Many council communists seemed to end up as worshipping spontaneity, merely commentatting on the class struggle, having nothing to offer except advice that was too late and never reaching those it was intended for.

If we are prepared to admit that most of those who claimed these labels in the past have nothing to offer, what are we left with? We are left with a core of revolutionary politics which is shared by many who call themselves "marxists"and "anarchists". We simply prefer to ditch the labels. We believe that our What We Stand For goes some way towards describing that core of ideas. So it is hardly surprising that as a revolutionary you find little new in it.

So what are we advocating? We are advocating a society without bosses or wage slaves, a society without buying and selling, without money, without states, nations or blocs. We are advocating a society where each person freely gives of their best and takes what they need, a society based on co-operation and mutual aid. We believe that this can only come about by the self activity of the working class, a class that becomes aware of what it wants and acts without leaders telling it what to do.

We believe that all those who share these views should work together to help bring them about. So we work with other groups of revolutionaries, hopefully in a non-sectarian way. We also think that people who agree with us and are able to work with us should think about joining.

Prison Life

This piece is extracted from some letters from Stephen Windsor, a prisoner whose story we told in the last issue.

Being in prison is a hard life for anyone no matter what the crime.

Being in prison is soul destroying for some one like me who has committed no crime at all. The only benefit for most in similar positions as I find myself in, is that you do gain great strength from the fighting that you are forced to do.

Most men and women whoa re fightng their convictions get locked away in solitary at some stage.

I was locked in a room with a toilet and a sink which was no bigger than the average loo in the average

Prison Life, Continued.

house; for 14 months solid - try sitting in your toilet for 14 months.

The most important thing a prisoner can have is some source of communication. Letters are vital and the more the merrier. You cannot begin to imagine the feeling at receiving a letter even from acomplete stranger; someone who is showing a tiny bit of interest or even concern.

Prisoners ask for little and most will not impose on those that write. Letters from the occasional stranger kept me sane, kept me alive when I was way down the hole that was seemingly getting bigger. No way out, just never ending constant mental brutality inflicted by warders. The physical torture one is forced to endure.

Two men hanged themselves during this 14 month period and at least one a week tried to do so, and in so doing caused serious damage to himself.

Often one cannot tell one's family what is happening to them in prison but can relate this to a complete stranger who occasionally writes.

It matters not what anyone writes to me about. I always find time to reply and believe it or not give advice when I feel I can.

The knowledge that someone has bothered to write does give you hope when there is nothing else except four walls and 17 screws every time your door is opened.

Thanks.

Stephen Windsor is in HMP Noranside, Fern-by-Forfar, Angus, Scotland.

BBC BULLSHIT!

As an angry parent of a child depending on high level hospital care, one of our Subversion members was involved in a campaign to save Booth Hall Children's hospital in Manchester. This was most revealing of the attitude of the media and showed most clearly whose side they are on.

Our member took part in a radio phone-in (in a moment of high dudgeon). This left the BBC with her telephone number on its records. A week later Operation Irma began in former-Yougoslavia to bring seriously injured children to Britain for hospital care. Amidst great surprise, the BBC rang to ask her opinion for radio and T/V! Shortly after the family had waved farewell to the sound and lights crew the phone rang-Radio Merseyside wanted a "statement" saying that The People Of The North West did not want to see outsiders brought in taking valuable hospital space from poor British children. When our member naturally refused to say anything of the kind they immmediatly lost all interest.

They were aiming to create xenophobic attitudes out of thin air for the sake of entertainment. What Scumbags. The truth should never be seen to get in the way of a good story no matter what hatred, deaths and agony should result. The whole operation was simply a whitewash of the effects of war and the capitalist owned media were simply continuing the hatred it creates to devide and rule. There is no difference between what Merseyside Radio wanted said and slogans printed inthe Sun during the Falklands War except as a matter of scale.

GUARDIAN GARBAGE!

In Gob we trust . . .

WE LIKE the magazine Proletarian Gob, but Proletarian Gob doesn't like us. "You only have to read the newspapers or watch the television news," it declares, "to realise what a stupid bunch of gits journalists, newsreaders, commentators and their camera operators are."

Yeah? Prove it. "They only tell us half the story; they repeat police reports, or press releases; they are lazy; they sensationalise; they lie; they pester people; they are smug and ugly." *Ugly?*

Proletarian Gob advocates class war. You can tell how anti-establishment it is because, on its cover, it has the words: "More tea, Vicar? Or how about a punch in the face?"

But back to the reasoned criticism. "The 'news' is very important to our rulers, not because it provides information, but because it keeps us distracted, fills our head with crap, and sells lies to us. The 'news' is not news, but propaganda."

Fair enough. "For example," the Gob offers, "the rightwing will say that striking workers should not have attacked the police; the leftwing will say that the police provoked them or started it. No one will be saying that attacking the police in general is a positive thing." Which it is, of course.

"Again, we are constantly meant to think about the best ways to run the economy; we aren't meant to think that we'd be better off *without* an economy."

But back to journalism. "The sight of journalists in 'war torn' or famine areas is particularly revolting. Their high wages and the expense of carting themselves and equipment around is supposed to be justified by their 'telling the world the truth' or 'making a difference'. Of course we aren't told the truth — ie that capitalism creates the economic rivalries that causes wars and that war is actually good for business, or that famines are caused by the world economic system."

So what's to be done, Gob old chum? "There is a saying that the first casualty of war is truth, well the first casualty of the class war should be journalists."

Try telling that to the family of Farzad Bazoft, Mr Gob.

This load of garbage appeared in the Weekend Guardian a few weeks back. It tried to take the piss out of ***PROLETARIAN GOB,*** a "sister" paper of ***SUBVERSION.***

As the ***GOB*** said, "Journalists today in fact fulfil a similar function for Authority as priests used to do in medieval Europe....filling peoples heads with useless ideas and debates .... and spying on people. Don"t trust journalists - their humanity has been squeezed out of them and their brains are on auto-pilot."

The article above about the BBC just shows how true this is.

For a **free** copy, write to: Proletarian Gob, BM Makhno, London WC1N3XX

MILITANT'S MILLIONS

Here is yet another damning report of a Trotskyist political organisation in this country, and comes from a meeting held in Manchester in November 1991 by the group in question - Militant.

"One of the most important assets of a political organisation like ours is its revolutionary consciousness and politics and the revolutionary consciousness of its members and if you could price that, a revolutionary consciousness starts at £35 per month (subs to the group that is).

"We carry out work in 58 countries and we have councillors, MPs, Trade Union officials and organisers. We are the only revolutionary organisation this country has ever seen". These are the words (reproduced from memory) of Dave Carr, full-time organiser for Militant, spoken at the above meeting.

When Militant (now known as Militant Labour) appear on the streets with their newspapers, stickers, collecting tins, appealing for funds like the Sarah Thornton campaign, anti-fascism and stop the BNP - none of that money goes to the cause. Not one penny. So do not give them a penny.

One of the gimmicks used to stop you in the street is "Sign this petition against ---" . If you stop to sign the petition you will be asked do you want to buy a paper (this line is always a good one). If you say no then you will be asked "would you like to make a donation to the campaign". If you do make that donation then the money goes straight to Militant and the petition will be torn-up later on (the only reason for a petition is that it is easier to ask you for money plus they have your name and address), maybe on that same day - a SUBVERSION member witnessed Margaret Manning, a Militant councillor, tearing up Sarah Thornton campaign petitions just after she had prepared to bank the campaign money into Militant's own account.

In 1991 Militant's account had over 40,000 just sitting around gathering dust and cobwebs in a capitalist bank - money collected by Militant's fronts goes the same way. In the case of Sarah Thornton, when she killed her cruel husband Militant hit the streets with FREE SARAH THORNTON NOW stickers. Sarah Thornton herself received not one iota from the stickers or her campaign - the money went straight to Militant. YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED

REVIEW: CARRY ON RECRUITING!

Why the SWP dumped the "downturn" in a "dash for growth" and other party pieces.

TROTWATCH. c/o Box NDF,72 Radford Rd, Hyson Green, Nottingham NG7 5FT

No, this is not a little-known carry-on film with Sid James as Tony Cliff, but a new pamphlet by Trotwatch which carries on from where our predecessor group Wildcat left off with the pamphlet 'How Socialist is the Socialist Workers' Party?', written at the time of the Miners' Strike.

Many of our readers will know just how disgustingly reactionary, deceitful and hypocritical the SWP are; that they spend half the time contradicting what they say the other half of the time; that their paper-sellers' memory extends no further back than the last zig-zag of the party line etc., but this pamphlet explains why they behave in the way they do.

The main points covered are:

1) The reasons for the "downturn" policy a decade ago and the "upturn" policy more recently. The pamphlet argues that, rather than a change in the material circumstances of the class struggle, as the SWP argue, it is purely the differing needs of the SWP apparatus that determined these turns (in particular the presence or absence of a significant rival in the shape of the Labour Left).

2) The relationship of the SWP to both the T.U.C. and Labour Party bureaucracies, showing how the SWP criticises them (indeed even says at times that the TU leaders are incapable of changing because of their position in society) and yet never countenances a break with them, nor fails to call on them for leadership.

The reasons for this inconsistency (perhaps the most consistent feature of the SWP's policies) are explained.

3) The initial lack of interest by the SWP in the anti-Poll Tax movement (which was reversed when this latter grew to become a mass movement) is located (according to the pamphlet) in both sectarian hostility to Militant (which was doing well out of it) and its refusal to take seriously any struggles not based in the workplace.

4) The thoroughly undemocratic internal structure of the SWP. The well-known division between immovable leaders and an obedient, passive mass of paper-fodder is discussed and explained.

A possible criticism is that the pamphlet is unclear as to what significance workplace struggle has - is it just the same as struggle in any other arena? Subversion believes that, although the workplace is not the only arena of class struggle (the anti-Poll Tax having been one of the best examples in recent years), none the less it is on the whole more important, the first among equals, if you like.

Another possible criticism is the extent to which we can really say that the Poll Tax was defeated. But, quibbles aside, we recommend our readers without hesitation to get hold of this excellent pamphlet.

Subversion

WHAT WE STAND FOR

We meet regularly for political discussion and to organise our activities. The following is a brief description of our basic political principles:

- We are against all forms of capitalism: private, state and self-managed.

- We are for communism, which is a classless society in which all goods are distributed according to needs and desires.

- We are actively opposed to all ideologies which divide the working class, such as religion, sexism and racism.

- We are against all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" movements such as the IRA.

- The working class (wage labourers, the unemployed, housewives, etc.) is the revolutionary class; only its struggle can liberate humanity from scarcity, war and economic crisis.

- Trade unions are part of the capitalist system, selling our labour power to the bosses and sabotaging our struggles. We support independent working class struggle, in all areas of life under capitalism, outside the control of the trade unions and all political parties.

- We totally oppose all capitalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. We are against participation in fronts with these organisations.

- We are against participation in parliamentary elections; we are for the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class and the establishment of organisations of working class power.

- We are against sectarianism, and support principled co-operation among revolutionaries.

- We exist to actively particpate in escalating the class war towards communism

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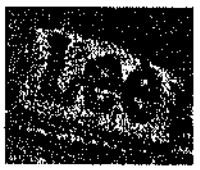

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Subversion

Issue 15

FREE!

We say: Labour must follow John Smith's lead!

In this issue:

* South Africa * Racism * Unions vs. the Workers * Letters * and more!

The Anti-Leader Page

This is not a Left-Wing paper. A Left-Wing paper would tell you that the Labour Party and Trade Unions are falling down on the job. Their job is to defend the working class and they're not doing it well enough. They need to listen to the advice of *real* Left-Wingers.

A Left-Wing paper would (probably) tell you that South Africa is now free, although it still needs to go a bit further.

A Left-Wing paper would also explain how the world would be a wonderful place if racism and fascism and sexism were got rid of. But to get full socialism would still need a further step. Just a little one.

And a Left-Wing paper would say other things, like: National Liberation will stop workers from being oppressed; the Workers' State in Russia is in danger! (optional) and, most of all, the solution to all the problems of us workers is to accept the leadership of the Socialist / Communist / Revolutionary / Workers / Party / League / Group / Organisation (delete as necessary).

This is an anti-Left (or Ultra-Left, or Libertarian) Communist paper.

We say that the Labour Party and Trade Unions are part of Capitalism - their Working Class image gives them the advantage that they can lead us astray more easily, and far from falling down on the job they are holding us down quite effectively. We must fight them as our class enemy.

We say that the South African Ruling Class is now free - the black part of it can now get their share of the profits and the white part has greater stability to enjoy. The workers have gained nothing.

We say that racism, fascism and sexism are just tools of the Capitalists. Some times they play these things up and some times they play them down, but our struggle to be free needs to be *much, much* more than just opposing some of the Capitalists' tools, even though they be the nastiest ones.

We say: National Liberation is just freedom for a new squad of our jailers; Russia has never been a 'Workers' State' but has always been the enemy of the workers; and the solution to our problems is to struggle against the totality of Capitalism (whether it shows its Right face or its Left face) and to keep full control of our struggles. No-one can be led to freedom - we must lead ourselves. Only thus can we achieve a classless, Communist society. **Our aim in Subversion** is to be a part of this process.

In this issue there is an article on the 'New' South Africa, an article about pro-Capitalist anti-racism, and several articles on workplace struggles and the obstacle of the Trade Unions.

There is also a discussion article, "Revolutionaries in the Workplace". It looks at how new, alternative unions would be just as bad as the old ones . It was written from the practical experience of the author in a 'Rank and File' group working in the Post Office.

There are also articles on Poverty, CFCs and correspondence with our readers.

Want to know more? Just fill in this form and return it to us... or to save your valuable issue of Subversion, just write.

☐ **Please send me future issues of Subversion**

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The New South Africa
(the Same Old System)

Nelson Mandela has not disappointed us. Here's what we said four years ago (SUBVERSION no. 3), not long after he was released from prison:

"When the MPLA, Frelimo, Zanu, Sandinistas etc. came to power the masses discovered the same thing they did after the French Revolution - plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose (the more it changes, the more it stays the same).

"...When [groups like this] come to power the result is always the same. They get on with the business of running capitalism and exploiting the working class.

"...When the ANC comes to power it will be exactly the same, only they're being a bit more obvious about it than most. This is because of the dovetailing of interests between them and the Nationalist Party at this moment in history."

We knew he could be relied on.

'I just couldn't let Subversion down...'

So let's look at what has happened so far:

The Myth: The glorious tide of democracy would sweep over the land, consigning the parties of white privilege to the scrap heap, crushing the Zulu fascists and bestowing the bounty of material well-being on the mass of black workers.

The Reality: None of the above has happened, nor looks likely to happen.

The most striking characteristic of the ANC government is the extent to which it has "bent over backward" to accommodate the other factions, in particular the Nationalist Party and the Zulu fascists of Inkatha.So much for the scrap heap.

The first budget of the new government was described a s "cautious" - i.e. it is quite acceptable to the white old guard. Notably it retains VAT on basic foodstuffs which was a particularly hated policy among workers when the old government brought it in - their hardship will be none the sweeter for the letters ANC in the government's name. So much for the mass of black workers.

Mandela has also lost no time in promoting the idea of stepping up the Arms Trade - whoever in future is killed by military produce from South Africa will no doubt rest easier in knowing they have been killed by a non-racial bullet or shell.

The famous first democratic election was also not all it was cracked up to be. It is clear that in Natal there was wholesale fraud - the final published results bore no relationship to how people actually voted and were simply agreed between the main parties as an additional negotiating point. It has also been argued, quite plausibly in our view, that the *whole* election result throughout the country was agreed in the same way - this would explain the remarkable delay in releasing the figures. So much for "democracy". (Bourgeois democracy is of course a con trick, giving the form of *legal* equality to a situation of total *in*equality of power and property - it originated as a means of enshrining the rule of the capitalist class, with the support of the rest of society who imagine they are "equal" and that therefore it is *their* system too. The point here is that *even that* is sorely lacking in the "new" South Africa. In the same vein Mandela has also ensured a continuing institutional role for the Zulu monarchy, publicly praising the king - today even the left don't believe that the ANC is socialist, but the ironic thing is that Mandela is not even any good by the standards of Bourgeois democracy!)

So why does the old con trick keep on working?

Movements like the ANC, that is to say "democratic" or "national liberation" movements will keep on succeeding in conning the working class as long as the basic lies of Bourgeois democracy keep on being believed.

The basic points that cannot be repeated too often are that:

* Workers have no country - all countries belong to the capitalists.

* Bourgeois democracy is just a fig leaf for the tyranny of the capitalist class.The vote is a choice between which of our rulers shall rule us - it is not worth having, and is indeed an extra stick to beat us.

* The fake-socialists of the Left tirelessly promote policies which will lead workers down a blind alley, for the greater good of capitalism. As a part of that they are unswerving in their devotion to movements of the "democratic" or "national liberation" type, and despite often criticising them when they come to power if they too blatantly repress the working class, they will *always* support every new one that comes on the scene.

* The only course that our class can take is to resolutely oppose all states and all factions of capitalism, whether fascistic or

Continued on page 6

What's WRONG with anti-racism

Subversion is not anti-racist because "we are all human beings" or "we all have the same colour blood" or "we should all be able to live together, respecting each others different cultures, religions, colour, etc". Subversion is anti-racist because racism is one of the ideological tools used by our rulers to keep the international working class divided and unaware of the thing which binds all the worlds workers together: the fact that we *are* the working class; that we must sell our labour power to survive; that we are wage slaves. Racism has been used to justify genocide and slavery in the past but now it is used to help keep class consciousness at bay. Instead of seeing the world as being made up of bosses and workers we are meant to see it filled up with "foreigners". We are meant to see all the people who live in France as one group, instead of as it really is: a small group of exploiters and the mass of exploited, just as it is in Britain. Just as *we* are encouraged to identify with the very same scum who rip us off, make us work, sack us, send us to war, we are also encouraged to identify "foreign" workers with the very scumbags who rip *them* off. We are meant to blame migrant workers for local unemployment. We are meant to fear everyone in Japan or Germany because they are surely conspiring to wreck "our economy", aren't they?

Divided and ruled

Just as racism in its basic forms helps dilute and divert working class consciousness so does the "anti-racist" formula: "we are all human beings". This sort of argument tries to say that "we" are all in it together, "we" means bosses and workers, the leaders and the led, the powerful and the powerless. Once again we (the working class) are supposed to identify with our exploiters (the bosses/bourgeoisie) and THEIR murdering economy, capitalism. This use of the word "we" to describe all humans is a clever way of denying class, notice how Greenies say that "we" have ruined the planet. Are they stupid? Do they really think that all humans are to blame, all the masses of people who have been thrown off the land, all the masses of proletarians who have starved, been killed by poverty, forced to work like slaves all their lives? Anyone with half an ounce of sense can see that the great majority of the worlds population has never had any control over even their own lives let alone the actions of those people who live on our backs. Anyone who uses the word "we" to describe every person in the world either has no idea that there is an exploiting class and an exploited class, or wants to have at least some say in the ordering about and bleeding dry of the working class. And this is certainly the aim of left-wingers who say "we are all human beings", as well as the "green" movement.

Pro-capitalist anti-racism

The anti-racism of the Labour Movement is a pro-capitalism anti-racism, you won't catch the leader of the TUC saying that racism is a tool used by the ruling class to keep the international working class divided. The leader of the TUC will say that racism is a cancer that divides *society*, and that it is stirred up by right wing elements. Yes, racism may be stirred up by capitalism's right wing defenders, but society is already divided into classes - only a defender of capitalism and the present order of things could call racism a threat to society. There is NOTHING about this society worth defending but it is essential for workers to fight racism in the working class as part of the struggle to raise class consciousness and unite against capitalism. While the Labour Movement might defend a black member of the boss class who is under racist attack we could not. What we would do is use the incident to point out the fact that racism is a tool of the ruling class to keep us confused and in our place, but we could never defend this black boss or her/his "right" to trade, give orders, make profits, etc. - if we defended the rights of anyone to lord it over us we would be anti-working class.

A bit of anti-racism never did our careers any harm .....

What is race anyway?

At the beginning of this article an example of racism was given which involved only attitudes between France and Britain. Some people might say that this is not racism because the French and the British are of the same "race", they might call it "chauvinism" instead. The people who argue this obviously think that there are real differences biological between people in the world, they would categorise all people with the same skin colour into a specific racial type (African, Eurasian etc.) therefore arguing that "racism" can only happen between these different coloured groups and that only "chauvinism" can happen between people of different countries but who share the same colour. Other people argue that racism can only be defined in terms of a "dominant country" exploiting a "minor country", or the legacy of this exploitation. Thus British people can only be racist to people from all its ex-colonies, although in effect they really mean anyone in those countries that Britain is perceived to be superior to. In this philosophy people from the ex-colonies cannot be racist towards white British people, what we might perceive as racism (e.g., "fuck off, you white bastard") is, in fact, anti-imperialism!

Class

It's not worth trying to find your way around the torturous and inane logic of the proponents of the ideas described above. If we want to understand what racism really has to do with our daily lives, what the reality of it is, then we must look at it from a class perspective. We must understand who actually benefits from it and why it is an enemy of class struggle. Never mind all the dubious *philosophical* ins and outs of it: racism sets workers against workers and obscures who our real enemies are - the manipulators and benefactors of a divided and confused working class.

Papist Plots an Anti-Semitism

If you want any proof of the good work racism has done for the bosses you only have to take a cursory glance through history. In the 1840's and '50's the Tory Party began a campaign against Irish workers in Britain in order to divide the Chartist Movement. Tory henchmen carried out several atrocities against workers in the North and West which were blamed on Irish workers. Meanwhile the ruling class tried to whip up fear of "Papist Plots" and migrant labour taking work from "the English". While the specific incidents have been forgotten the effects of this campaign to divide the working class are still evident in England. It's no coincidence that anti-Semitism began to be encouraged in Germany after World War One, things had to be done to fragment a proletariat that had created a revolution in 1919 and might try again in the economic depression of the 1920's. It was funny how a couple of years ago we heard lots about strikes in the new "unified" Germany but now most of the news concerns the "rising tide of racism". It has proved very handy for the German Labour Movement and the bosses in general to be able to urge workers to see "society" under threat from nazi types. It's a brutal way of diverting a rising class combativity, and who benefits? The bosses of course.

Recession

In general, it seems, we are likely to see more racism when the economy is in "recession" and when it seems likely that workers might fight back. Since the Trafalgar Square riot and the defeat of the Poll Tax we have seen a marked rise in actual racist attacks, media coverage and the Labour Movement getting back on the anti-racist bandwagon. Is it a coincidence?

Today racism does have fairly deep roots in the working class but racism and nationalism tend to be pushed aside during rising class struggle. What we must ask ourselves is: who would benefit from a dissipation of the spirit of rebellion that was brought on by the Poll Tax? Certainly the bosses and certainly the Labour Movement, of which even the left wing (Militant) crapped themselves because of the riot. Instead of getting out of hand, thinking that if we beat the Poll Tax we could beat other things, instead of escalating the class struggle, it's much better for us to worry about rising nazism and go on well-policed and harmless marches where we can hear our Labour Movement leaders going on about the "threat to society" posed by racism. But they don't really want racism to go away, just as they don't want capitalism, oppression and wage slavery to go away either. And racism is so useful to world capitalism that only a fool could believe that they'd let it disappear. Racism can only be defeated in class struggle and only the destruction of global capitalism and the creation of true human community will put it to rest forever, because no longer will it serve any use.

Opportunity Knocls

It will be argued, of course, that things like Equal Opportunities [specifically, the Commission for Racial Equality, 1976] have done a lot to erode racist attitudes and allow black workers, as well as women and the disabled, to "do well" in the workplace. In fact bosses in large companies (including local councils, Royal Mail, etc.) see Equal Opportunities as a numbers game.

Managers are given targets for the percentage of black workers they should employ and if they achieve these targets they look much better to their superiors. It goes something like this: the Government realises that black people need to be better integrated into the workforce (why does the State like black police officers?), so they set up things like the Commission for Racial Equality, which, very handily, makes the Government look like it disagrees with racism:

Employers are then encouraged to set up an Equal Opportunities policy, being persuaded that they don't really want to look like an old fashioned racist and sexist company, do they? And anyway, local councils and Government might not buy products and services from companies that don't pursue Equal Opportunities, they've got the black, women and disabled vote to think of, after all. And so

managers recruit more "under-represented" people, not because anyone in this whole chain is actually anti-racist but simply because everyone in the chain is looking after their own interests (i.e. their profits or power).

We mustn't let ourselves get caught up in their game. The very least that Equal Opportunities might have done for black workers in Britain is have made it easier for them to get a job now. But even this is not true, is it? There is a far greater percentage of black people unemployed than white people, let's face it, it was easier for black people to get work in the 1950's, when there was no such thing as Equal Opportunities!

The capitalists are playing games with us. Black workers are supposed to defend a "society" that has Equal Opportunities written into law, that says it is anti-racist, and yet black workers are worse off now than they were 20 or 30 years ago (as all workers are, of course), and for all this Equal Opportunities bullshit we now have another "rising tide of racism". Racism and "anti-racism": for our rulers both are tricks to keep us under the heel.

South Africa, continued "democratic", whether right or left. Our only goal must be the destruction of capitalist society itself, worldwide, and the creation of a truly free and equal society, without oppressions or divisions, where no-one has power over another, but *all* of us have power over our lives and over our destiny.

This is what *we* mean by the word Communism.

Let us conclude with another quote from what we wrote four years ago - let the final words of that article be the final words of this one:

DOWN WITH DE KLERK
DOWN WITH MANDELA
FORWARD TO COMMUNIST REVOLUTION.

POVERTY IN THE USA

As the economic crisis continues to bite, despite the official claims of "recovery", the US Budget Deficit likelwise continues to grow. In Britain we've seen our "own" government hitting at the living standards of the poorest to try to decrease the UK's defecit and reduce public borrowing. Something similar is happening in the USA. One of the current popular passtimes amongst the rich and powerful is to blame pensionsers! They claim that pensioners are taking more than their "fair" share from the US Treasury. This is a process we are familiar with here, with the media blaming "social security scroungers" and "single mothers".

The media are trying to create an image of pensioners living in the lap of luxury at taxpayers expense. Two different reports show how false this is.

The Urban Institute reports that there are nearly 1.9 US pensioners who have to choose whether to buy food or medecine, 1.3 million who have to choose between buying food and paying rent or other bills and 1.1 million who go whole days with nothing to eat.

The US Census Bureau reports that there are nearly 4 million over 65 living in poverty in the USA. Poverty hits women especially hard. One in five over 75 live in poverty. It hits ethnic minorities even worse. 43% of black women over 75 live in poverty!

All this in the richest nation in history.

It's not just pensioners. One in ten Americans has to use a soup kitchen at some time. This picture shows a church-run kitchen in Birmingham, Alabama. Children are among the hardest hit by hunger.

PIT SENSE OR NO SENSE?

Pit Sense Versus the State - a history of militant miners in the Doncaster area, by David John Douglass. Phoenix Press, £4.50.

This thin volume unfortunately does not live up to its title. Most of the book is a recital of union resolutions and a commentary on the activities of Doncaster miners in the N.U.M. during the 1984/85 national strike. For those not familiar with the mining industry or the structure and functioning of the N.U.M. it is also quite difficult to follow, lacking as it does a preliminary chronology of the strike or annotated diagram of the N.U.M.'s organisational structure.

Indeed the purpose behind the writing of this book is difficult to fathom until you reach the last 3 short chapters which are largely a duplication of material previously published in the pamphlet 'Refracted Perspective'. It then becomes apparent that it is an attempt to provide some documentary evidence in support of Douglass's defence of trade unionism and the N.U.M. in particular against criticism by revolutionaries. Basically he believes that "unofficial" action is parallel to and supportive of "official union action, rather than the beginning of a move outside and against the unions, as we believe. Partly this is done by falsely amalgamating the views of the "left" (particularly the trotskyists with those of genuine revolutionaries. Douglass makes a reasonable job of exposing the left's contradictory and arrogant attitude towards workers in struggle but his position in the N.U.M prevents him from dealing adequately with revolutionary criticism.

A reasonable demolition job on Douglass's arguments has already been done in the Wildcat pamphlet "outside and against the unions" (60p from us, or direct from Wildcat, BM Cat, London, WC1N 3XX). Other useful material on this debate can also be found in "Echanges" (from BP241, 75866 PARIS CEDEX 18, FRANCE in English and French). We don't intend to repeat all these arguments here but a few points are worth making.

Friends of the miners queue up for their copy of Dave Douglass's new book.

In saying that trade unions and trade unionism are a barrier to the successful extension and development of the class struggle we are *not* saying that unions will *never* support or even organise industrial action.

Firstly, the trade union officials if they are to maintain their role as the workers' 'representatives' and junior partners in the management of capitalism must be able to demonstrate their control of their 'constituency'. This means that in the face of militancy amongst their members 'action' of some kind has to be proposed - but the *purpose* of the action is to maintain their control not promote the workers' interests.

Secondly, capitalism is made up of numerous sectional interests. The ruling class is only united when faced with a potentially revolutionary opposition. In normal circumstances different sections of the ruling class are at each others throats. Different sections will be on top at different times. It is quite possible for trade union officials or a particular group of trade union officials to have to fight for *their* interests or even their survival *within* capitalism. That may even require wheeling in their members to do battle on *their* behalf. In some cases, and we suggest this applied to the miners and the NUM in 1984/5, *both* the workers and the union officials and their organisation can be under threat at the *same* time. In this situation understanding the *different* interests of each when both are involved in a 'life or death' struggle is much more difficult, but none-the-less necessary. The old adage that "our enemies' enemies are not necessarily our friends" is worth remembering.

Thirdly, whilst we think it is necessary in any major struggle for workers to move outside the union framework, this process can often happen in practice, in only a halting and partial way. It is up to revolutionaries to encourage this process not try to tie it back into the union framework as Douglass wants to.

And lastly it is true to say that there are many aspects to the nature of the British coal mining industry and its relationship to miners and the union which make the case of the NUM not entirely typical of British and other unions. Douglass continually makes the mistake of generalising from the experience of the NUM rather than looking at the actual experience of other workers and the unions they belong to.

All in all we have to say that the writing of this book was a wasted opportunity.

CFCs ~ still with us after all these years

Two decades ago scientists first confirmed that chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) depleted the ozone layer in the earth's upper atmosphere that protects animal and plant life from the sun's harmful ultraviolet radiation. By that time CFCs had been widely used as a cooling fluid for refrigerators, freezers and air conditioners for four decades and for years as a solvent and spray propellant.

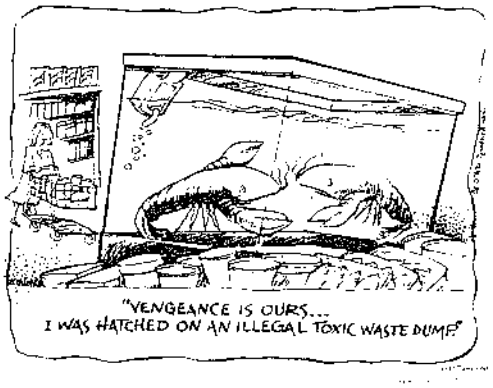
In 1985, scientists were suprised to discover that a hole in the ozone layer had developed over Antarctica and that it was growing nearly every year. Not long ago, a second thinning of the ozone layer was discovered over the Northern Hemisphere. The 1980s were also the years of the upsurge in "green" politics. Moves to ban the use of CFCs were claimed by Green politicians to be the result of their propaganda, consumer pressure and the victory of common sense. Actually, by this time, a number of large companies had discovered that by marketing "ozone friendly" products they could steal market share from their competitors.

As soon as "benign" alternatives had been developed governments moved to "action" and an international agreement called the Montreal Protocol was signed in 1987, which mandated cutting CFC production in half by1999.

But it turns out that the Montreal Protocol wasn't what it seemed to be. Ozone depletion is occuring at a more rapid rate than ever. This is often blamed on developing countries in the so-called "Third World" still using cheap CFCs. Greens are then led into the xenophobic and racist politics of blaming the problem on nasty foreigners.

Reality, however, is different. It is apparent that there are powerful capitalist interests in industry and the state which are acting to allow the destruction of the environment to continue. Important amongst these are are the chemical giants and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the USA.

CFC production has been cut in half, but the production of halocarbons increased. Typically, CFC producers have turned their attention to the next most profitable compounds in coming up with "alternatives" to CFCs. Du Pont, for example, has reportedly invested $500 million in facilities for the production of hydrochloro-fluorocarbons (HCFCs) and hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). These are hardly benign alternatives.



HFCs don't destroy the ozone layer. But they have 3,200 times the effect of carbon dioxide on global warming - the trend (caused presently mostly by the carbon dioxide released by capitalist industry and automobiles) toward ever greater temperatures that could eventually melt the polar ice caps, flood low-lying coastal areas and reduce the temperate zones to deserts. HCFCs do damage to the ozone layer, but at a rate one-sixth to one-fourth of CFCs. In 1992 the indutrialized nations agreed to phase out HCFCs - by the year 2030.

The list of available alternatives for virtually every present commercial application of CFCs,HFCs and HCFCs is long and growing.

Even when alternatives are cheaper (which is not always the case), their uptake has been slow. The US and British states has made sure that new products are held up until after existing CFC producers have had the chance to produce their own alternatives. The EPA has been a particularly effective forum for protecting the interests of companies like DuPont and ICI. A spokesman for one producer said that his company's alternative air conditioning product had been delayed, "We have felt blocked from the marketplace until after the chemical companies established themselves as viable substitutes".

In a sane world these substances would not be produced. Increased ultraviolet radiation can cause increased skin cancer and cataracts, weaken the immune system in humans and other animals, and diminish and destroy crops - and recent research shows these effects to be much stronger than previously thought. Sunscreens, once thought to be effective against the sun's harmful ultraviolet radiation, do little to prevent damage to the human immune system, new research shows. As former United Nations Environmental Program chairman Mostafa Tolba recently observed, the sun's ultraviolet radiation may turn out to be "AIDS from the sky.

This whole sorry story is a testament to the antisocial nature of the capitalist system. Like Nero fiddling while Rome burned, the capitalist state is fiddling too - trying to maintain the profit margins of some of the dominant elements of the capitalist system while the risks of ozone depletion increasingly endanger life as we know it.

REVOLUTIONARIES IN THE WORKPLACE

The first thing to state is that the last thing ***SUBVERSION*** would want to encourage is the creation of a *rank and file movement*. Rank and file movements are always and without question *union movements*. They are inspired by the mistaken notion that The Unions have *failed us*, instead of the truth: which is that all unions are our enemy. [Unions are organisations that negotiate with the bosses over the ways and rates at which we are exploited, but in no way do they object to the principle of our exploitation. Unions support capitalism and work, and need capitalism to survive.]

DAM RANK AND FILISTS!

Take the case of the postal workers' ***COMMUNICATION WORKERS GROUP:-***

The CWG was set up by members of the Direct Action Movement (DAM) and was a rank and file postal workers group. The DAM promotes anarcho-syndicalism as a means of working class organisation. Anarcho-syndicalists want to organise unions democratically and imbue them with anarchist politics. Such unions, imbued with anarchist methods and ideals, anarcho-syndicalists argue, will be revolutionary.

CWG never got to the stage where the DAM members pushed for it to become an actual union. CWG, through its bulletin, Communication Worker (CW), aimed to inform and radicalise postal workers, to emphasise that active solidarity across trade, industry and union divides was essential if victories were to be won. In the tradition of rank and file groups CWG was open to all militant workers, including low-level union officials, i.e. shop stewards.

For most of the time CWG worked on the basis of an agreement between the various political tendencies. These ranged from anarchist, or anti-state communist to trotskyist, as well as the original anarcho-syndicalism. As time went by these divisions became more pronounced. Eventually we had to re-emphasise the groups broader rank and file nature by drawing up a basic aims and principles. Due to the variance of views within the organisation these common denominators had to be fairly low and it was generally felt that the aims and principles were virtually meaningless as soon as we had written them.

COMPROMISING POSITIONS

This compromise didn't last long. Some of us felt we needed to make deeper and clearer criticisms of unions and rank and filism. We all saw the potential (however distant!) for a group like CWG to eventually replace the union - in small ways, over certain areas, or totally. To some this was highly desirable of course, but others had misgivings. We realised that we could only replace the existing postal workers union (UCW) with *another union*, and if CWG expanded and became more successful this is eventually what the group would become.

The question became: how to work in a rank and file workers group, clearly and consistently attacking the union, without letting the group turn itself into a reformist organisation or union. We liked to see ourselves as a revolutionary group, but what would happen if we were flooded with militant, but reformist-minded workers? What if these workers wanted the group to articulate reformist demands? What if we gained more support in a workplace than the existing union, would we then participate in a day to day dialogue with the employers, would we help make deals, would we accept the "legality" of exploitation as long as it was a "fairer" exploitation and one we had actively agreed to? Would we behave in just the same way as the old union once *we* had become the permanent workplace organisation?

The first problem we tried to tackle was the old one about being swamped by different minded individuals.

KEEPING OUT THE RIFF-RAFF

There was no formal way of preventing people from entering the group, we just hoped that if we didn't like someone's politics then the rest of the group would agree and that person wouldn't be let in. Obviously this wasn't very satisfactory. Some thought we shouldn't let SWP members in, for example, because they were actively pro-statist/authoritarian and they might try to hijack the group. Others thought we should let them in as long as they didn't stray out of line too much or try to push their politics down our throats, thus causing interminable political arguments. Others htought we should let them in since they were militant workers.

This problem was never satisfactorily resolved, the reason being that it lies at the crux of the argument over whether a rank and file group can be revolutionary. That is, whether a group that attracts an increasing number of non-revolutionaries can remain revolutionary in all its publications and interventions.

Our temporary solution was to print our basic aims and principles in the bulletin and hope the "wrong" sort of people wouldn't want to join anyway! [

In the event this never became a practical problem, partly due to the fact that the CWG didn't survive that much longer.

It has been argued that we should set up groups, encourage people to join, and hopefully their experience and learning in the group will turn them into revolutionaries. This might be alright if you have a hierarchical Party of thousands and are recruiting one or two people a month. But if a drastically smaller group (a few people), with egalitarian methods, recruited that many people as members then they would soon find themselves outweighed by the new recruits and unable to brainwash them fast enough to keep the group on its original lines!

We have enough reformist organisations around already, we don't want to inadvertantly create any more.

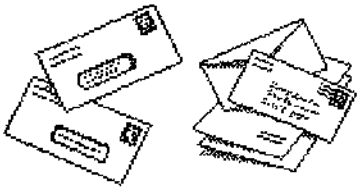
To cut a long story short, the anti-union tendency finally realised the impossibility of keeping, or rather *making*, this rank and file group revolutionary. By no means did this mean we had fully developed our ideas but we did know that we no longer wanted to make the compromises towards unionism that were necessary in working with anarcho-syndicalists and leftists.

WORKPLACE GROUPS

There is a knee-jerk reflex amongst a lot of revolutionaries when talking about "the workplace", they say that what we need are workplace groups. Beyond this though little practical is usually done or suggested. It's time to face up to the hollowness of this slogan and forget about trying (or talking about trying!) to set up our exalted Revolutionary Workplace Groups. What we *need* is more revolutionaries *everywhere*. If we have more revolutionaries everywhere a few, at least, are going to have jobs. Revolutionaries in their workplaces will respond to disputes, attempt to escalate workplaces struggles and generally try to show other workers what a crap situation we are all in. They will argue against the economy (capitalism) and its union lackey, and during struggles they will actively participate in specific actions: like producing leaflets, secondary picketting, sabotage, setting up and speaking at unnofficial assemblies, etc.

If we happen to be a few revolutionaries at one workplace and produce regular propaganda specific to work, this is fortunate, but *obviously* we are also acting as revolutionaries together outside work.

The time has come to finally put



PROGRAMME

1) We are not an electoral front for a political party or parties. We aim to build the strength of the rank and file. We do not aim to capture full time union positions. Full time officials may not join this group.

2) A living wage for a 35 hour week, which would make non-essential overtime and the bonus system unnecessary. The present IWM bonus system is divisive, splitting worker from worker, office from office. All workers in the industry should receive the same wage.

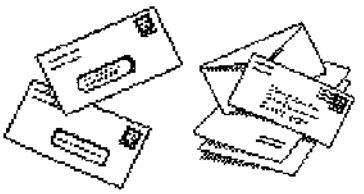
3) No speedups, no redundancies, recruitment of more full time staff with a view to a further cut in hours. No loss of pay.

4) Union officials should be subject to a limited period in office, not exceeding 2 years. All officials to be elected by and constantly accountable to the membership. Officials to subject to immediate recall, and to be paid the average wage.
No officials to spend the majority of time away from the shop floor.

5) All disputes to be controlled by the rank and file. Strikes to be run through regular mass meetings of all strikers. These meetings to coordinate picketing etc.
Any and all delegates must be accountable to, and subject to immediate recall by the mass meetings. We are against postal ballots and secret negotiations.

6) A single union for all communication workers. We are against sectionalism and for the widest possible solidarity.

This was the original programme of the Communication Workers' Group



What We Stand For

* We aim to build the strength of the rank and file. All struggles must be called and controlled by the rank and file.
* We are independent of all political parties and trade union bureaucracies.
* We aim to build an organisation involving all communication workers.
* Our immediate aim is to build an organisation involving all communication workers.
* Our long term aim is the creation of a classless, stateless society where everyone is free and equal, through the institution of workers' self management, and the destruction of the state.
* We believe all struggles should be spread to as many sections of the working class as possible, and that solidarity is the key to winning any dispute.
* We are against all forms of discrimination (such as sexism and racism) that cause divisions within the working class.

This was the later and more radical version.

to rest the myth of "workplace groups" and their desirability - unless we are talking about *temporary* groupings of workers formed during struggles to perpetrate specific acts of propaganda or violence against the bosses, union and economy in general.

believed a few more crumbs off our masters' tables would appease our real class interests.

Our message must be revolutionary, not reformist. We support the struggle of the working class to improve its living standards. We aren't interested in reform campaigns that, *by their nature*, are only aiming at modifying the economy, which means modifying our exploitation. However, just because some people want to turn a struggle into a reform campaign does not mean that we don't support the struggle. The anti-Poll Tax fight was an example of this. It was primarily a struggle of the working class to resist an attack on living standards. When there is a pay dispute we try to show the way to win it but also why pay rises will never be enough. When we go back to work, whether we have won or not, it is not the revolutionaries that should negotiate with the bosses, others can do this. Some might say this is "purist", to not negotiate with the bosses ourselves if we agree that, in the circumstances, such negotiation is inevitable.

"Well," said Pat after he read the first issue of Communication Worker, "I'll just get Mrs Goggins to shoot the bosses and then we can form a workers' council, smash the state and abolish the wages system.

Some might say that this is all a bit too "purist" and that we should be involved in creating or sustaining reformist demands or campaigns in order to supposedly escalate the class struggle, however, there are plenty of reformist workers around, ready to demand a wage rise, or abortion rights, etc, without going further. Some lefties think we have to formulate reformist demands for workers to take up because otherwise they wouldn't think of any themselves. This is patronising and wrong. Workers are constantly making demands. For us to take part in putting forward demands would be merely to lapse into reformism, as we gave the impression that we

Well, we may win the odd battle in the class war but the working class is always in defeat while there is wage-slavery - so *revolutionaries should never lead workers back to work.* To do such a thing is to help the bosses manage our oppression - *which is what reformism is all about.* If we have to go back to work we go as proletarians, not as "managers".

Just as we shouldn't take union posts we shouldn't encourage the creation of rank and file groups or movements. A revolutionary rank and file movement is a contradiction in terms, there can only be a *revolutionary* movement.

Letters

ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM

Dear Subversion,
A brief reply to your comments on questions raised in Issue 14.
I did not raise the "old thorny union question" in the manner you imply but your use of it in order to deliver a patronising lecture on reformism is unnecesary. Neither I, nor most of your readers I suspect, need it. We worked that one out for ourselves a long time ago.

Whilst admitting that you are offering nothing new and obviously borrowing your ideas from all and sundry you praise the ACF (Subversion No. 11) for having, "rejected most strands of the anarchist movement as represented by anarcho-syndicalism, lifestylism, anarcho-pacifism, radical liberalism and so on."

I was not aware that an anarchist "movement" existed. The last three in your list represent nothing tangible.They are figments of their own imaginations and your bracketing of them with anarcho-syndicalism is a crude conflation worthy of the average Trot, serving only to make you appear inept. One wonders how many variants might have followed but for the "and so on".

In your response to my note you claim that, "many anarchists either became 'Marxists' or idiotic liberals." Doesn't this imply that they didn't understand anarchism in the first place? Their departure (from what?) proves nothing. Just out of interest, some figures might be interesting - any chance?

It appears that you are not as opposed to unions as you at first implied, recognising that workers, using the "fundamental nature of unions" i.e. solidarity, have managed to force concessions from employers and the State. That there are not yet revolutionary unions strong enough to move beyond this does not mean that the anarcho- syndicalist methodology is incorrect. Certainly there have been mistakes in the past, they have been debated to death and serve to prove the anarchist point about supping with the State.

Rejecting all political "labels" doesn't really solve anything. However, a distinct political viewpoint is something different in that it clarifies a present position while providing an opportunity to build upon ideas fought for successfully in the past. People without such viewpoints are often "labelled" by their opponents and can be stuck with that definition until they can prove otherwise.Your position as "revolutionary communists" presumably sets you apart from those student groupscules with identical 'positions', whose aim in life is to flood the world with over-priced glossy magazines extolling the mouthings of the central committee but you will be hard-pressed to explain the difference to the passer-by. It seems particularly odd that a group proclaiming itself the bearer of vanguardist ideas (in the best sense of the term) should be so reluctant to define itself in any immediate,seperate, meaningful way.

Your ideas for a future society and your means of struggle do see very familiar which is why I return to the point - just who the hell are you?

ROY

SUBVERSION REPLIES:

Dear Roy,
Firstly, we had no intention of being patronising. It is not part of our politics to insult people who appear to be on our own wavelength. We are certainly not into scoring debating points. It may have taken us a long time to publish the reply to your first letter, but this was solely due to reasons of space. It was always our intention to include it eventually, when it fitted the general "balance" of the issue in hand. As such, we are quite within our rights to use the reply as an opportunity to make clear our general attitude about unions. Our views do not come out of thin air. They are the result of years of activity in and around the unions. You asked whether a member of Subversion "is or could be a member of a trade union". You did not ask specifically about a particular type of union. Therefore we replied by stating our understanding of how unions operate - before we went on to explain why members of Subversion are members of unions. To do otherwise would have left readers wondering where on earth our ideas came from. Likewise we never claimed to be "leaving the rest of us behind". So we set out to explain what we see ourselves as.

There are two specific points I want to reply to. They are the question of an "anarchist movement" and the "fundamental nature of unions". To start with the second. You misquote us. We nowhere talked of the "fundamental nature of unions" as solidarity or otherwise. The "fundamental nature of unions" is to act as middle men in the labour market, smoothing the way for the exploitation of labour. They are an integral part of the management of capitalism. It is a reflection of how much the working class is dominated by the ideology of reformism and unionism that so many believe that the unions are on their side. Solidarity, on the other hand is something that originates in the working class. It is this class solidarity that has led to all the gains the class has made. I would defy you to identify one struggle that has been won because of the unions. More likely it has been

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won because workers act against the advice of their "leaders". The great Miners' Strike of the 1980s is a case in point. The Union's domination of the strike helped lead to its isolation and defeat. All the activities that miners developed themselves, like the road blockades, spreading the picketing or the hit squads were condemned by the union leadership.
About the only example we can think of of an organisation calling itself a union which did not betray the class was the IWW in the USA in the first 20 years of this century. This was because it was not, despite its claims, a permanent union organisation. Rather it was a large core of agitators who recruited workers for short periods of time to fight for specific demands. It never became incorporated into capitalism's management structure because it was physically liquidated by the state and its members were poached by the more powerful AFL.

Our point is not that we need revolutionary unions. We are convinced that the history of anarcho-syndicalism shows that it is just another blind alley. Large permanent organisations of non-revolutionary workers end up negotiating with the bosses and then the state. They end up helping to run the thing they claim to oppose. This is of course exactly what happened to the CNT! Should the DAM's various efforts ever come to anything then they'll go the same route.

As to the existence of an "anarchist movement" of otherwise, we have long experience of the types you refer to. Most recently we attended some meetings called by the East Midlands Anarchists. At these meetings were some class struggle anarchists but overwhelmingly the swamp of liberals, talking about AFA, ALF and alternative money schemes like LETS. There were even some who advocated supporting various efforts by the local state. When we were involved in theClass Struggle Anarchist Network we got involved in fruitless (and inour view, false) arguments over the value of community against industrial struggle and even had to deal with people who wanted to support Iraq in the Gulf War. Members of your own organisation we met uncritically supported Scargill in the Miners' Strike.

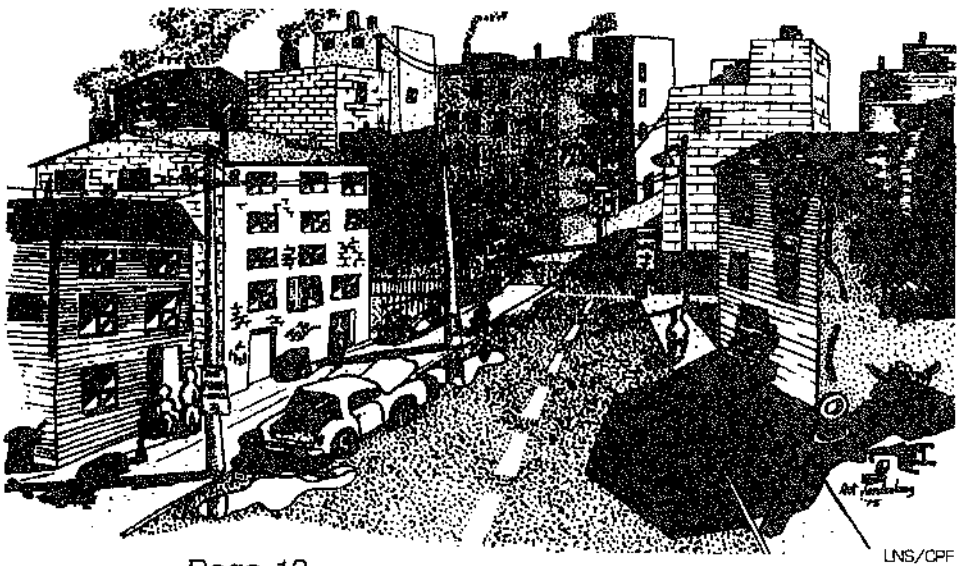
We have argued with anarchist comrades that this mess makes it impossible to "reclaim" the name of anarchism. Whatever contributions anarchists have made to the working class revolutionary movement, and they have been enormous, the name itself has been so corrupted by counter-revolutionaries that there is little point clinging to it.
This is even more true of marxism. Anyone who reads the pages of Subversion will see that we have a distinct political viewpoint. Whatever we say, they will attach labels to us. Most anarchists think we are marxists - most marxists think we are anarchists. We stand by our decision,as a group, not to claim either name. In the long term we hope to see a coming together of all who hold views similar to our own, from whatever tradition they claim to come.

Dear Subversion,
I recently read your paper 'Subversion' and I loved it. the political theory and analysis of topical events was very good, unlike the shit I'm used to reading in the so-called 'revolutionary' (!) papers such as 'Socialist Worker' to name one of the worst offenders of bullshit-peddling! But I noticed you put that you think the main battleground of class-resistance and conflict is the workplace and I feel I must disagree with you.

The destruction of the old mass-employing 'heavy industries' like steel, ship-building, coal-mining, car factories, etc. and the capitalist assault on the old workers movement (militant Trade Unions and shop stewards groups) has meant that capitalism is no longer threatened by conflict in the workplace as growing unemployment and the displacement of workers from mass-industries into small-employers (offices, restaurants, service-sector firms, etc.) has fragmented and dispersed the workforce into lots of tiny groups rather than fewer mass bodies of workers in factories, etc....

The main battleground of class resistance now is the communities and estates where working class people live, the revolutionary movement (or what's left of it) must focus on campaigns around anti-social crime, housing, poverty, and unemployment for example now rather than continue its obsession with strikes that is a relic of past struggles and a bygone era.

The future for revolutionaries is clear for those committed to the job. We must forge strong links between local groups of revolutionaries and the areas and communities that those revolutionaries are active in. So



LNS/CPF

then like in Palestine where despairing Israeli troops say "everything we do, good or bad, in the occupied territories boosts support for the intifada". Because the communities of the Palestinians have been thoroughly 'infected' with the radical virus the might of the Israeli army is finding the crushing of resistance virtually impossible, hence the accommodation they are seeking with the pro-capitalist counter-revolutionary PLO.

Anyway I am convinced this is the way forward for the revolutionary movement in this country.

Mark

Dear Mark,
Despite what you say capitalism still owes its whole existence to the labour we do for it day after day, capital and profits can only be created by using workers. Just because in Britain the "old mass-employing heavy industries" have largely been dismantled it doesn't mean that workers in work (at the point of production, one of the places where capital is reproduced) are any less important. In fact, one of the reasons the old industries have been dismantled is precisely because the workers in those industries *were* considered to be too strong. [Nicholas Ridley's 1977 plan to take on the miners was drafted in direct response to the defeat of Heath's government at the hands of coal, power and steel workers]. The fact that the bosses prefer smaller and more divided (by pay, rank, etc) workforces is a sign that they realise the threat to their existence posed by a united and strong workforce. We mustn't forget this, the biggest fear of the bourgeoisie is that we will stop working for them.

Just as "in the old days" the working class was not simply made up of steel workers, miners, shipyard workers and car workers so today the working class doesn't simply live in well-defined or large estates. Both these views of the "core" of the working class are romantic. The tendency to see only "industrial" or "skilled" workers as the "proper" working class was as wrong a hundred years ago as it is now. Similarly, to concentrate our efforts on council estates, or so-called "working class communities", is to disregard the fact that most of the working class live elsewhere, or rather, that we live *everywhere*.

This isn't, of course, to say that class struggle in the places we live isn't important. We need to fight capital on all its terrains. What we should be aware of though is the fact that what you might call a "working class community" is at best a very limited, and at worst a very misleading term. We don't live in communities, we live in areas designed and controlled by capital. Our fight back on the terrain of our living spaces (eg. resisting evictions, bailiffs, roads,etc.) is a manifestation of class resistance, it must not be derailed into so-called "community resistance". If you're going to draw a line around an area on a map and call that a working class community you're inevitably going to include local shops and businesses. The little shop on the corner exploits and rips us off in just the same way as the big superstore down the road (employing assistants, selling goods to us, etc.). Also, we don't just live in our homes or the small areas around our homes, we also spend a lot of our lives travelling, or at our workplaces, or at shops; we should be trying to reclaim all these places as well. If we concentrate on particular working class living areas we will be neglecting the rest of the class and we'll be in danger of forgetting that the real reason that the working class is so dangerous to capitalism and the bosses is because no matter where we live it is our wage-slavery that they are dependent on. If the only thing wrong with capitalism is that some of us live in crappy housing then those of us who don't don't have anything to complain about!

Don't you ever get nervous staying in these HIGH CRIME neighborhoods?
INVESTMENT BROKERS
WALL ST.
STOCK EXCHAN
Carol A. Simpson ©1990
Carol Simpson

Since the beginning of capitalism "anti-social crime, housing, poverty and unemployment" have been a problem for the working class and it is plain to see that the only permanent solution to these facts of life under capitalism is the destruction of the whole system of exploitation, exchange, rulers and ruled. If our main aim is to get rid of capitalism and create a true human, classless community then we have to attack it on all levels. Fighting and propagandising around issues such as anti-social crime, bad housing, poverty, etc is obviously not enough, we also have to attack the motor of capitalism, the thing its whole existence is actually based on, which is *our productive labour.*

We mustn't be fooled: the working class has not disappeared, and there is no so-called "under-class". Yes, effective class struggle may be difficult, but that's the way they want it. Yes, workforces may have been split up, and a lot of workers conned into thinking that they have no power or aren't even working class, but it's all part of their strategy to keep us as weak as possible at the heart of capitalism, our workplaces.

SECTION 11 CUTS

This is a copy of a leaflet we handed out at a demonstration called by the National Union of Teachers in Oldham to protest against the sacking of Section 11 teachers. It is typical of the NUT that this demonstration was called on early closing day, in the town centre, during the first week of the local holidays. They called a demo..... but nobody came.

The papers and news are full of the teachers' fight against testing of schoolchildren with the SATs boycott. The NUT too is full of itself, claiming victory against Patten and the Tories. What is not so apparent is that this is against a background of massive job cuts, redundancies and increasing workloads for teachers and others in education. These cuts are carried out by local government at the instigation of the central state. The unions are using the SATs boycott as a way of disguising their own compliance and their real role as middle men in the labour market, managing the process of redundancy for the state.

One example of this is the case of Section 11. Section 11 is the name given to the provision of funds specifically for the education of children from ethnic minority groups. This is funded by the Home Office and is supposedly over and above a school's normal needs.

Two years ago there was a shake up of Section 11, accompanied by many job losses. This year the Home Office has reduced the amount of money it provides to local authorities. This funding cut amounts to around 35% and will add up to around 4,000 jobs, if local authorities fail to make up the difference. Where they do make up the difference, services suffer elsewhere.

Teachers are understandably agitated by this. It is against this background that the NUT has launched a "campaign". Teachers in Tower Hamlets struck on 15th March. The union is prepared to tolerate limited strikes in single areas, safe in the knowledge that its rule book makes national coordinated action for more than 24 hours almost impossible by requiring a 2/3rds majority of all members in a secret ballot before sustained strike action (i.e. a strike with strike pay) can be taken.

In its magazine, THE TEACHER, the NUT has made much of jobs it has"saved". In effect what they have done is reduced the number of job losses and abandoned those teachers on fixed term, temporary contracts, who all lost their jobs on March 31st. These losses are disguised by early retirement or by teachers finding other work. At the end of the day all the NUT is concerned about is the headline figure of compulsory redundancies.

Meanwhile the left, in the form of the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA), whilst appearing very radical and talking much about racism and the Tories, backs the union's do-nothing policy. In a recent leaflet they called for, "a national day of action backed by a one day strike early in the summer term." The strike call is a total red-herring. There is no way that a ballot could be called and won in the time available to fight these job losses, as around half of them came into force on March 31st. What was needed was local action, outside the union's control - spreading and linking with education workers elsewhere.

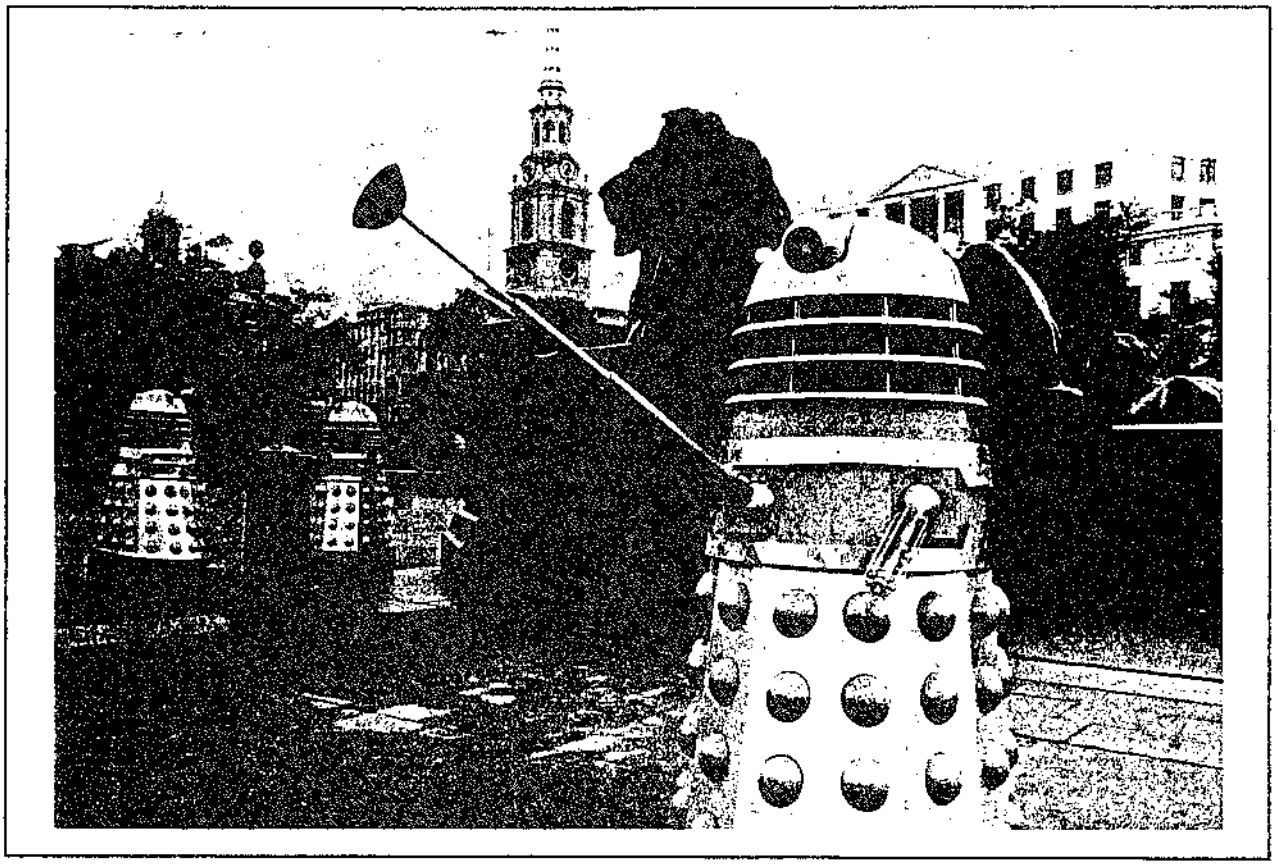
There can be no doubt that this cut is racist. It hits at children who are most in need and panders to racist sentiment to save money. It makes the workload of all teachers in schools with significant ethnic minority populations harder and makes the work for all the children harder too.

Moreover, it is being used as a way of forcing significant job losses through at a time when even more are on the way. If teachers are beaten over this, which seems increasingly likely, then the prospects for the future are grim. Already some authorities have seen even greater sackings. Oldham, for example, got rid of around 100 teachers this year - over 50 Section 11, 36 special needs plus others from the "mainstream" due to budget cuts. At one school this had been accompanied by an increase in hours taught amounting to one month's teaching a year for many staff. The future holds more of the same.

Education workers are divided and weakened by the unions. The unions are led by bureaucrats like Doug McAvoy (£70,000 a year) and Mary Hufford(£50,000 a year), both of the NUT. Their interests are not the same as those of the people who work in the education industry. Information is denied us by the union bosses.

Education workers need to get together outside and against the control of the unions.

Members of Subversion and the ACF are planning to launch an education bulletin later this year. It will be open to all revolutionaries. If you would like more information on this project write to us at our Manchester address.



New Labour leader Tony Blecch gives the stiff right plungered salute as, in the background, the two runners up watch enviously.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

We meet regularly for political discussion and to organise our activities. The following is a brief description of our basic political principles:

- We are against all forms of capitalism; private, state and self-managed.

- We are for communism, which is a classless society in which all goods are distributed according to needs and desires.

- We are actively opposed to all ideologies which divide the working class, such as religion, sexism and racism.

- We are against all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" movements such as the IRA.

- The working class (wage labourers, the unemployed, housewives, etc.) is the revolutionary class; only its struggle can liberate humanity from scarcity, war and economic crisis.

- Trade unions are part of the capitalist system, selling our labour power to the bosses and sabotaging our struggles. We support independent working class struggle, in all areas of life under capitalism, outside the control of the trade unions and all political parties.

- We totally oppose all capitalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. We are against participation in fronts with these organisations.

- We are against participation in parliamentary elections; we are for the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class and the establishment of organisations of working class power.

- We are against sectarianism, and support principled co-operation among revolutionaries.

- We exist to actively participate in escalating the class war towards communism

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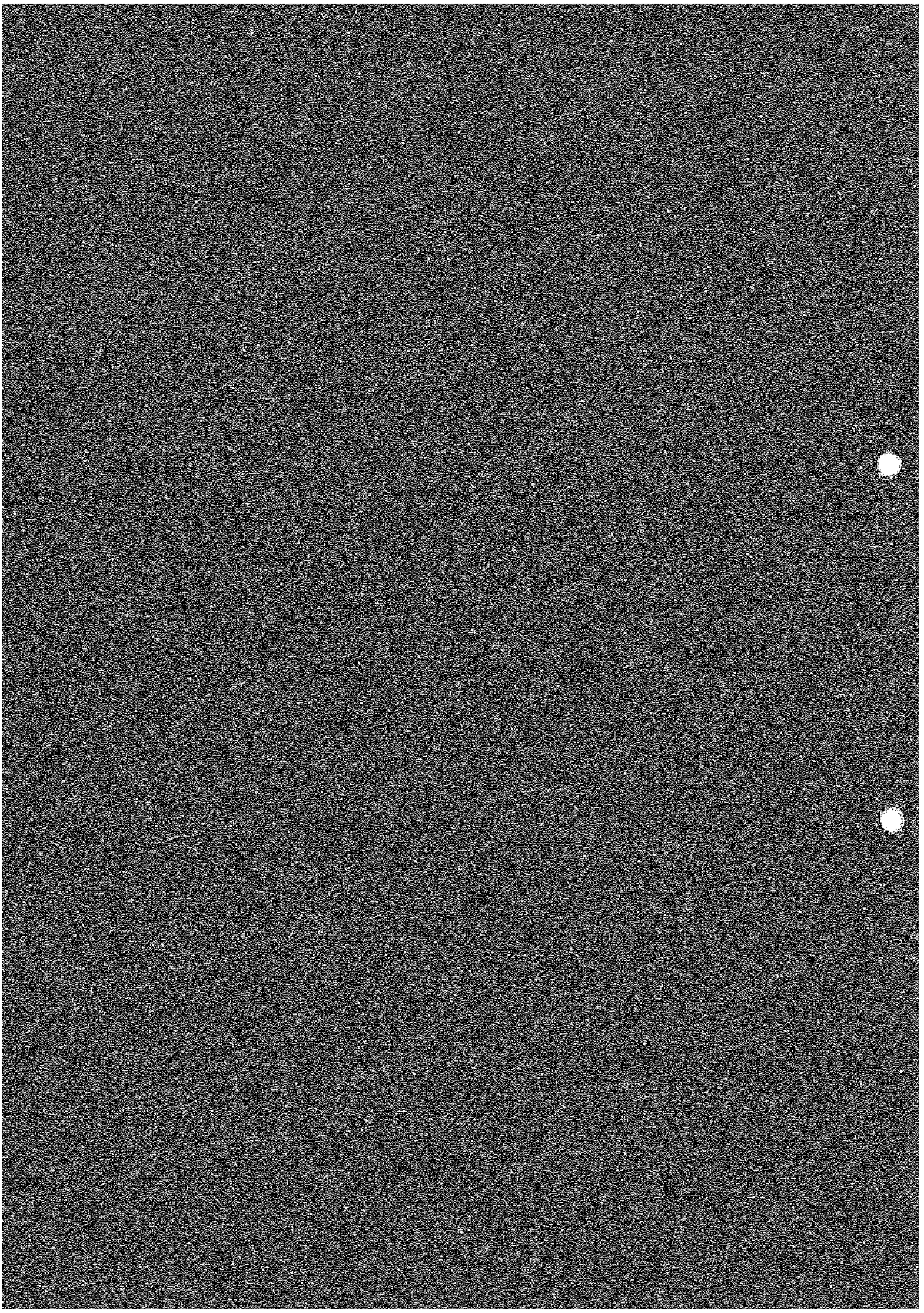
Subversion, Dept 10,
1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW

Subversion

Issue 16 FREE!

- Fight the War to End All Wars...
- Fight the Class War!



Subversion 16

For those who don't know, SUBVERSION believes in the creation of a society without classes or state power. A society without national boundaries, inequality or oppression. A society without money where all goods are freely available to all.

We believe such a society can only be created by the revolutionary overthrow of the state and the ruling class, by us, the working class.

SUBVERSION's activity consists of participating in the struggles of our class, and arguing the case for our revolutionary ideas.

Our principal focus of activity is our magazine, SUBVERSION, but we engage in a variety of other activities, depending on what's happening in the class struggle.

Since the last issue of the magazine we have produced a leaflet for, and attended various anti-criminal justice bill events. We organised, jointly with the Anarchist Communist Federation, a conference entitled "Beyond Rank and File Trade Unionism - 2" in London. We also attended various political network meetings (see report on page 15) and smaller political meetings.

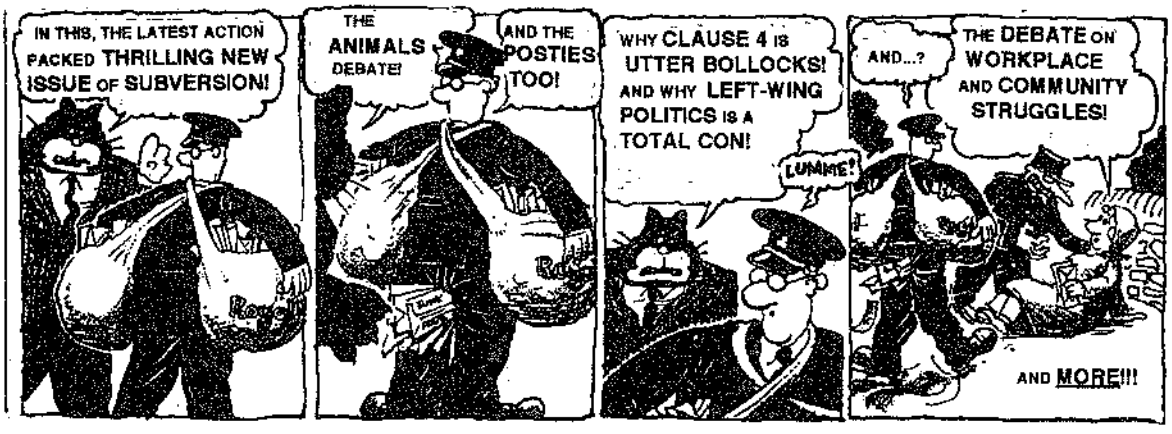
Our member who produces the magazine "Proletarian Gob" continues to express his stimulating "political rants" therein. At a recent Solidarity Federation (ex Direct Action Movement) public meeting in Manchester we were banned from distributing Proly Gob because they found a couple of articles "offensive", so there's a good recommendation for you!

Just recently we have organised a new series of our own public meetings in Manchester, and are planning another joint day-school with the ACF towards the end of the year, probably in Leeds.

We hope you will find SUBVERSION 16 thought-provoking and informative. If you want to help you can: write letters contributing to the debates in the magazine; take extra copies to give to your friends or other people (e.g. at work or at meetings or demos you may attend) or of course through financial contributions.

If you want to receive back copies, or any of the pamphlets we have produced, write to us at the group address.

If you consider yourself close enough to us politically to want to meet us, either just to find out more about our views or to discuss the possibility of working together, then don't be shy, write to us!


IN THIS, THE LATEST ACTION PACKED THRILLING NEW ISSUE OF SUBVERSION!
THE ANIMALS DEBATE!
AND THE POSTIES TOO!
WHY CLAUSE 4 IS UTTER BOLLOCKS! AND WHY LEFT-WING POLITICS IS A TOTAL CON!
LUMME!
AND...?
THE DEBATE ON WORKPLACE AND COMMUNITY STRUGGLES!
AND MORE!!!

Posties Again ..... A Tale of Two Cities

The Unreasonable Brigade

London..Wildcat Strike

As you are probably aware, last January there was a wildcat strike of postal delivery office workers in London that brought out around 15,000 workers. This was a short, but inspiring action. Postal workers have been facing a concerted attack on them by management for some seven years or so. This has come through mechanisation and under the guise of what is known as Total Quality Management. First we were made to feel part of the business by having "Team Talks". Now, for example, we're virtually forced to fill in questionnaires about how to improve management's effectiveness!

Postal workers have a good history of wildcat action. In the last year alone there have been about 75 illegal walkouts across the country. Management aim to subdue this sort of behaviour and to make Royal Mail look appealing to potential sharebuyers (although this last prospect is shelved for now).

Because UCW headquarters did not "repudiate" the illegal walkout in London, Royal Mail were able to sue the union, who were ordered to pay a £7,500 fine and legal costs of some £100,000. UCW General Secretary, Alan Johnson, who is paid well over £50,000 a year, was understandably a bit perturbed about risks to union funds. The poor dear said: "We must ensure union branches always act constitutionally on industrial relations issues". It is pretty easy to see why union leaders (Scargill is a famous example) are so concerned about union funds. There are 170,000 UCW members and we each pay £1.71 per week to the union. This is a fuck of a lot of money they get each week! You'd be tempted to think that with those sort of resources we'd be on a lot more than our gross basic pay of £176.91 (outside London) a week by now!

Well, you might if you thought the unions were on the side of the workers instead of where they really are: in the bosses' camp, on the side of the ECONOMY (i.e. capitalism).

You see, the unions and the bosses are the voice of REASON in society. We, the majority, the working class, have tendencies towards irrationality, extremism, and even outright lunacy. When we retaliate we are threatening the bosses "right to manage"; when we say we want to carry on working and receiving a wage when the bosses have introduced machinery or other working practises to replace us with, or they just want to close our works down, we are flying in the face of the laws of the market, the economy; when we say we want more money we are threatening inflation, interest rates, economic stability and growth, and God in Heaven Himself. The brutal fact of our continued exploitation is partly disguised and justified by "economic" hocus pocus. "Market forces", "keeping down inflation", "the threat of interest rate rises", these phantoms serve to mask and make more palatable the very real jackboot that bears down on the back of ou necks.

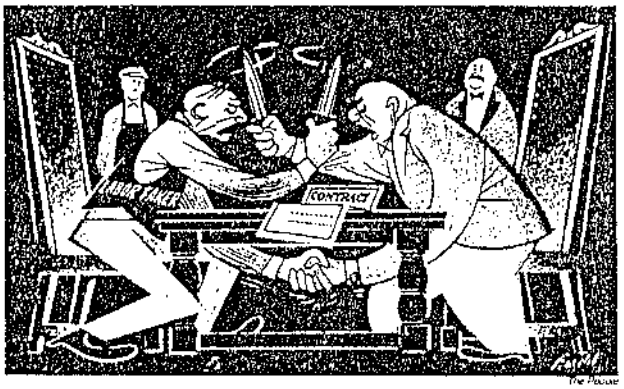
We have to be kept in line, our irrational and extreme tendencies have to be curbed, and the Unions have proved their worth in this regard time and time again, ad infinitum, and for ever and ever.

We have to understand that Unions play an important part in the Economy (as a controller and manipulator of labour, as well as the fact that they are major shareholders in other businesses). It is the Economy that we must smash. The class struggle, the road to communism, is the fight for a society in which there are no classes, no exploitation, and no economy.

ONLY WORKING CLASS LUNACY AND RANK UNREASONABLENESS CAN BRING DOWN THE ECONOMY!

SOUTHAMPTON POSTIES STITCHED UP - AGAIN

On February 1st a mass meeting of delivery staff voted to reject management plans to force them to do two deliveries on their second turn. This vote committed the union (UCW) to ballot for strike action. Not happy with this result the union immediately called a 'special meeting' back at the canteen. This was calculated to wear people down as not all delivery staff would have been willing to go all the way back to town after their second delivery. Not suprisingly hardly anyone turned up, the vote was retaken and the decision to reject 'two in one' working was reversed - much to the relief of the UCW and Post Office bosses.



The situation in Southampton is probably representative of offices in a lot of other places. The Mechanised Letter Office is said to be like a prison. In the delivery office

casualisation is making greater inroads. There are delivery workers who have been there for two and a half years who are still on six monthly contracts, with all the lack of security and benefits that implies. In Southampton overall there are 83 vacancies which are to be filled by casuals.

There seem to be contradictory approaches among workers to what is going on, reflecting differing traditions of struggle or the lack of a tradition. There is the shrinking number of 'career' postmen who have never known any other job for 20 odd years. In many cases a pride in the job is a barrier to adopting a more combative attitude. Southampton has never been a hotbed of militancy. There are also many ex-dockers who tend to be more resistant to management demands and more critical of the union, though they tend to be resented by the 'older' hands partly because of a reputation for 'laziness' (no bad thing!) and envy at perceived large redundancy payments from the docks. There are also the younger posties. Among them are those with a militant attitude, although the majority don't seem to give a shit - according to one worker. There does seem to be a lack of a tradition of struggle and not many appear to be willing to initiate it.

Across all these arbitrary divides - and a gross oversimplification of the attitudes of postal workers in Southampton - there seems to be an attitude of 'what the fuck can you do?' A mixture of extreme demoralisation and extreme anger. The UCW has helped to feed this. There are those who automatically associate any fightback with union action, so the consistent 'betrayals' of the UCW can be quite demoralising for them. As yet, in Southampton, as in most other places and most other jobs the attitude is not current that workers should do thing for themselves outside the existing channels. There is a need for a generalised intervention through discussion, leaflets, stickers, etc. that can go beyond reaching those who would be attracted to 'radical politics' anyway and make communist politics and autonomous class struggle the 'natural' goals of any future movement. How that is done is another matter, though the attitude that the daily class struggle will bring forth its own contradictions and solutions seems lacking

SUBVERSION NOTE:*This article was sent to us by a contact in Southampton. It should not, therefore, be assumed that we necessarily agree with everything in it. For example, we find the ending overly pessimistic.*

BACK ISSUES

We have copies of the last six issues of Subversion available, plus a few of earlier issues.

If you want a copy, then send a 25p stamp to our group address, stating which issue you want.

Total Quality Control
How to Exploit Your Workforce More

Last year the bosses brought in a firm of management consultants to look at the administration of the organisation where I work. No doubt some of you will have had the same experience recently too. If there's one group of people who never seem to be out of work it's those callous scum whose job it is to devise ways for the bosses to exploit us in more "efficient" and "effective" ways (two buzzwords in management jargon).

The fashion currently among many employers (as it has been for the past few years) is for the introduction of 'TQM' - Total Quality Management. Like all new strategies brought in at work by the bosses this is partly a response to the past struggles of the working class and partly a response to competition among the bosses themselves.

STRAIN

In this instance the organisation was not in the usual situation of losing in its struggle against its competitors and seeking to sack lots of its employees. Instead, every aspect of the organisation was expanding at a very rapid rate...except the number of workers who were expected to carry out this increased level of activity. The question was, therefore, how to screw greater "productivity" out of the existing workforce. Never mind that we had already been experiencing a greater and greater burden and intensity of work over the past few years, and that in the bosses' own words everyone was working "under increasing and nearly intolerable strain".

BRAINSTORMING

The details of the specific organisational changes which the management consultants came up with needn't concern us here; what is more interesting is the way in which they set about doing their job.

One of the main ways of gathering the information on which the final proposals for change were based was through "brainstorming" sessions, in which everyone in the organisation, from top to bottom, was supposed to participate, generating suggestions for improving the way things were done. Yes, hard though it was to believe, us thick shits who are usually expected to unquestioningly obey orders and keep our opinions to ourselves were actually being asked what we thought for once! Too bad that it was only to find out how we ourselves thought we could be exploited more thoroughly.

DISPENSABLE

Yet techniques like "brainstorming" tacitly acknowledge that while we could get along just fine without the bosses, they can't survive for a single moment without us. This was admitted repeatedly in the management consultants' documents: "The project team [i.e. the top bosses] will not be telling you the 'right' answers since neither they nor the consultants have enough knowledge to do this"; "The outcome is determined by everyone in the process; after all you are the best people to propose what the outcome should be"; etc, etc. (So isn't it funny how the bosses suddenly forget how dispensable they are when they are justifying the vast material privileges they enjoy over us - privileges based on wealth which is created by our hard work and invention and then stolen from us).

RESPONSES

Now it would be heartening to report that where I work the management consultants were greeted with defiant cries of "Shove your brainstorming sessions up your arse", or if not that exactly, at least that they were met with sullen non-cooperation. Sadly however this was not generally the case. Nearly

780 workers were supposed to participate in the brainstorming sessions and over 1500 different ideas for change were produced - a response with which the bosses were well pleased.

Evidently we need to think hard about how we can combat "brainstorming", "quality", and other similar management strategies. One way is simply to keep your mouth shut and not contribute anything (but tell your colleagues what you're up to, and why, and encourage them to do the same).

Apparently though some companies have wised up to this and impose "quotas" on the sessions i.e. everyone has to come up with at least a certain number of suggestions. In these circumstances, what you could do is take advantage of the usual "rule" of brainstorming that there is (supposedly) nothing which you are not allowed to say. For example where I work the management consultants stated: "All ideas are valid and can range over any subjects to improve processes and the environment in which people work, both inside and outside each individual office and the scope of the project". Now that sounds to me like an invitation to suggest all sorts of fanciful ideas which will be no use at all to the organisation but which you can waste a lot of time talking about!

We'd like to know what else other workers who have experience of this might suggest, particularly in the way of collective resistance, rather than just what we can do as individuals. But we also have to recognise that there are certain underlying reasons why people can go along with exercises like brainstorming apparently with such enthusiasm.

MOTIVATION

For the bosses, the primary motivation in what they do is concerned with its exchange value, and only after that with its use value; in other words, they are not particularly bothered how shoddy the goods they market are or how poor the services they sell are, so long as they can make a profit out of them. For us as members of the working class, our motivations are actually not all that different. We want to get the highest price for our labour power and don't particularly care how little or badly we work to 'earn' it.

Yet at the same time it can also be very demoralising to have to do a job, day in, day out, which is boring, or wasteful, or shoddy, especially when you can see straight away how easily it could be made more interesting, or efficient, or better. Although the profit motive often thwarts these efforts, it is this urge to find ways to feel that we are not completely wasting our time that the management consultants seek to exploit; for according to them, "It is our experience that people want to do a good job and take pride in what they do...mistakes and the like are not made on purpose".

COMMUNICATION

However, despite their pleasure with the outcome of the "brainstorming" exercise where I work, the bosses haven't always been so successful in getting us so involved in perfecting our own exploitation. Two years ago an attempt was made to set up permanent voluntary groups of workers from among the various categories of staff to pass information up and down the organisation and come up with ways of solving any problems which arose. The buzzword then was "communications": tell the workers why decisions are made and they will respond positively, improving morale and motivation, and developing, as the bosses expressed it, "a sense of community and identity" and "a sense of belonging and ownership".

This strategy failed, because not enough people could be bothered volunteering for the groups (hence the management consultants had to be brought in to try a different approach). Perhaps people aren't so gullible as to believe that in a situation where we have no real control over what happens to us at work, and where we are constantly encouraged to compete against each other, any sense of 'ownership' or 'community' which developed could be anything other than a completely false sense of community and ownership.

Subversion On Line...

If you've got a computer and a modem, then you can contact Subversion through a couple of Bulletin Boards.

These are Arkham BBS in London, telephone 0171 738 5596 and 0171 738 5557 and Andy's BBS in Manchester, telephone 0161 343 4730.

When you phone up, choose the Message Area. For Arkham, you choose message area 6 and then select the Libertarian Echo. With Andy's you just select Message Area and then choose the Libertarian Echo. Leave a message for LOUIS ROBERTS.

This Echo is open to anyone to use. We use it for details of our meetings and for short articles.

If you leave a message on this Echo, we will reply within a couple of days, rather than the weeks it can take if you write to our box number.

Both these BBS are very friendly and are well worth supporting. They both have stacks of interesting files and carry discussions from all over the world.

We are currently trying to sort out an e-mail address. In the meantime you should be able to contact us at: louis.roberts@p0.f151.n254.z2.fidonet.org

We are sending copies of our magazines and pamphlets to Spunk Press. They can be contacted by e-mail at : spunk-info-request@lysator.liu.se With all e-mail it is essential to type the address exactly as printed here - don't get mixed up with UPPER and lower case!

The Struggle for Edinburgh Unemployed Workers Centre

Auld Reekie Anarchy

INTRODUCTION The following article was sent to us by a contact in Edinburgh. It is a good illustration of the anti-working class nature of the Labour Party and Trade Union bosses. The struggle also demonstrates the futility of playing the bosses' democracy game and the need for independently organised, collective direct action to defend working class interests.

Auld Reekie's unemployed got an early Christmas gift from the Labour-run Regional Council when, at dawn on 1st December, police and bailiffs battered down the barricaded back door of the former Edinburgh Unemployed Workers' Centre and evicted the rudely-roused occupation nightshift onto the capital's frigid streets.

The Centre's emergency phone-tree was immediately activated and within an hour scores of unwaged activists had gathered before and behind the building to prevent removal vans and council workers from plundering and boarding up Scotland's only autonomous, unfunded, self-managed community centre. By noon about 70 protesters were standing-off 9 vanloads of Lothian's finest and had determinedly but peacefully blocked 2 attempts to move the vans to the Centre's doors.

But at 2pm the police attacked in force, moving a hidden second line up behind the picket which they then encircled. As the circle tightened, protesters were knocked to the ground and some were crushed against walls. 21 were arrested and taken to the city's notorious St Leonards' Station, home of the Special Branch and scene of numerous mysterious cell deaths. Most of those arrested were charged with breach, some with police assault. All were held in soundproofed single cells for up to 12 hours before being released on cognisance of attending court. During their incarceration, despite the stifling isolation, the unbowed protesters mutinied in concert, the men beating out a tattoo on their cell doors while the women's wing was rent by a 'scream-in', causing vociferous rage in their captors.

The sprit of resistance remained unbroken, but the 6-month occupation of the Centre had been smashed, by the Labour council. The Labour council might have won the battle, but the war rages on. The conflict has its roots in a transfer of power within the management board, from 'Labour movement' bureaucrats to the non-aligned grassroots unemployed activists who actually used and ran the Centre. Here's the story...

AND SO IN THE BEGINNING

The Edinburgh Unemployed Workers Centre Trust was set up in 1981 on Labour/Trade Union guidelines as part of that movement's miserable response to mass unemployment. Originally situated in the basement of the Trades Council building where it functioned as a small resource centre and where it was clique-riddled, the EUWC moved in the mid-80s to part of a disused church off the city's Royal Mile. Funded by the Region, and in a more accessible situation, the EUWC attracted unwaged activists and broadened out, and became known as 'the Centre'.

THERE WAS THE LABOUR PARTY

The Centre was, theoretically speaking, managed by a board of seven trustees. A full-time paid worker was employed by them, an ex-TU official who soon became the focus of a sycophantic clique. But the day-to-day running of the Centre and its activities were decided by users-group weekly meetings. The users group contained two broad factions - the 'Labour movement' clique and a growing band of independent unwaged activists, who were involved in the fight against welfare cutbacks, formed a thriving Claimants Union and became highly active. The Centre became a focus for the anti-Workfare campaign. Then came the Poll Tax.

In 1989 the Centre moved to a three-storey disused school, owned by the council, in Broughton Street, on the fringe of the city's affluent Georgian New Town. Things looked promising, but the internal differences were increasing. The Labour controlled council was sending the bailiffs in against Poll Tax refuseniks. At the same time the Centre was an organising base for independent anti-Poll Tax activists. The Labour council was not happy, especially when the Centre's trustee board had four 'independents' elected to it from the users group, leaving the party bureaucrats in a minority of three. The Regional Council then cut off all the Centre's funding.

TRUSTEE WARS

By the end of 1991 the money was almost gone. The Centre's future became the subject of increasingly acrimonious rows among the trustee board. The war began in February 1992. One weekend when the Centre was empty, the three Labour trustees changed all the locks. Uniquely perhaps, the unemployed found themselves locked out. They were quick to rally and attack. Next month the users group and the majority of the trustees smashed back into the building, and reopened it for the unwaged public to use as was intended. On re-occupying the building, they discovered that the Centre's printing press had been used to produce a Labour Party manifesto, lucratively exploiting the Centre's charitable tax status.

Within weeks the ousted Labour clique was back. Their heavies broke in one Sunday morning in March. They weren't after the building this time, choosing instead to plunder all the Centre's equipment - £25,000 worth of computers, presses, cameras, washing machine - the lot, including the charity's accounts and minute books. They even took the teabags.

The pigs remained aloof from what they saw as 'a civil matter'. Legal aid was repeatedly denied to recover the

stolen equipment which had all been bought with public money for public use, and was now locked in garages or installed in a party-run centre in Dalkeith, near Edinburgh.

AGAINST THE CENTRE

The persons responsible for the theft were Labour councillors Tony Kinder and Des Loughney, both of them members of the Region's social work committee - the Centre's landlords. The third was Jim Milne, boss of the Dalkeith centre where some of the stolen equipment was installed. The redundant paid worker, George Wilson, was involved. Des Loughney is also secretary of Edinburgh & District Trades Council. These were powerful enemies, and they were soon to exercise that power.

Without any funding or equipment the Centre users chose to fight on. The building was opened right up, space rented to a wide variety of non-aligned political and community groups. The upstairs hall was used for successful gigs. The money came in, the Centre survived. The council's attempt to strangle it had failed. So they adopted a new ploy.

At a social work committee meeting in February 1993, with two renegade trustees attending, it was suddenly remembered that a clause in the Centre's lease had been inadvertently left out. The clause stipulated that the Centre could not be used for fundraising activities of any kind, without express permission. The gigs were stopped and the bills accrued, but the Centre fought on, and survived.

SOCIAL WORKERS MOVE IN

With the five-year lease running out, the building was gone over by a sarcastic and hostile social work inspectorate in early 1994. The subsequent social work report, entitled 'Application for Lease Renewal, EUWC' was a blatant concoction of contrived and artificial evidence, accusing the Centre of being a firetrap and operating an unhygienic cafe. It recommended that the lease not be renewed.

The Centre collective swung into furious action and soon, using official documents, had blasted the damning report to smithereens in a glare of press publicity and a sympathetic piece on STV's news-show 'Reporting Scotland'. Deputations took evidence to the social work committee of the council. But the evidence was ignored, and the vile report adopted.

The lease expired in June 1994 but with a loud and unanimous "Fuck you!" the users decided to occupy, and started on fortifications. The war was heating up.

An article in the first issue of 'Scottish Anarchist' which, like its parent body the Scottish Federation of Anarchists, originated in meetings at the Centre, described the situation after the lease's expiry thus:

"The once-familiar wooden doors are Derried now 'neath steel, sheets of steel shaped and bolted on by blacksmiths who refused all and any payment. 'Our donation to the Centre' said they. Solidarity lives.

"But the doors are open twixt noon and four every day bar Sunday, and the Centre is inhabited around the clock, seven days a week. Within opening hours a busy vegan cafe, famously cheap and substantial, is the hub of Centre activity and behind the chatting diners poster-festooned walls advertise gigs, meetings and actions, while the skirting tables sag beneath the mass of flyers and brochures explaining anti-VAT on Fuel, Criminally Injustice Bill, Stop the Fascists, community arts, homelessness, hunt sabs, gay rights, claimants' issues, women's issues, Poll Tax arrears, AIDS, Parks for the People...

"Above the cafe the pine-beamed mezzanine floor is being transformed into a snug reference library and reading room, while next door the Centre office advises callers, who phone in or drop in, on benefit rights. There's a well-equipped children's playroom and a basement darkroom.

"Upstairs, one end of the large hall is carpeted with defenders' sleeping bags while the other end is a mass of art and craft odds-and-ends with which the Creative Resource Network makes the puppets and props for its street theatre. The door of the small room opposite bears a hand-drawn sign - 'Cheap Claes Shoap'.

"The atmosphere is busy, cheery and sociable. No-one gets paid. Anyone can get involved. But when the doors are locked and blocked and the Centre quietens down, ears are cocked and nerves steeled for the baying of the bailiffs and the grunting of the pigs"

MUCKY STUFF AND FANS

On 1st December, as described, the shit hit the fan. It was, in a sense, a major victory. A collective of mainly unemployed folk had unprecedentedly occupied a building five minutes from the centre of Scotland's capital and had held out for six months, after having exposed the Labour bosses as liars and cheats. (In Scots law, squatting has always been treated as criminal trespass). Eventually the local state, Labour Party controlled, had been forced to send in scores of police and have 21 people, mostly unwaged, arrested and charged. It was a massive loss of face, especially with council elections looming large. Less than a fortnight after the eviction and arrests, hundreds demonstrated outside the shut-down Centre, which was by then well-graffiti'd: 'Viva la Centre!', 'Vote Labour-Vote Tory'.

THE NEXT STEP?

What now? The Centre collective has regrouped in temporary premises and is still conducting a range of activities - including how to get the Centre back. A spokesman says: "We are asking community groups not to accept any offer of the premises. If they do they would be co-operating with the Region in closing the Centre down. We'll take peaceful action against any group who try to use the building. What's at issue here is the right of ordinary people to take charge of their lives".

Resistance to the harassment of claimants is being organised, with regular leafleting of benefit offices. A new initiative from the centre is involvement in the direct action against the building of the M77 in Glasgow, weekly minibuses travelling through to join the inhabitants of Pollock Free State and the nearby council schemes in defiance of the tree cutters and JCBs.

Of those arrested on 1st December, two women and a man are soon to be tried, one woman on two charges of police assault, breach and resisting arrest.

Centre users demonstrated outside the year's first meeting of the Regional Council on 1st February. After the meeting, Cllr Brian Cavenagh, who had been instrumental in shutting down the Centre, boasted to the press and TV cameras that the council had just given£2,000 towards the publication

continued on page 11

Workers Control, Communitarianism, "New" Labour

Bollocks to Clause Four

The Miners lead the way

What a sight, 239 miners, relatives and their supporters marching up the hill singing triumphantly (in Welsh), the Internationale and the Red Flag, as Tower Colliery was re-opened under 'employee ownership'... just as their predecessors had in 1947, when the coal mines were nationalised! Each miner had invested £8,000 of redundancy money and in addition collectively taken on huge additional debts to launch this new venture.

Tyron O'Sullivan - NUM official, a driving force behind the buy out and now personnel director (no change there really!) said of all this, in confused comment to the press:

"...yesterday was a triumph for a different kind of socialism and for a fight back against old-fashioned state capitalism."

"...this is what I call real nationalisation".

"Making a profit has never been a problem for socialists...here we've got equal shares."

Ann Clwyd, Labour MP, added for good measure:

"It's not the Union Jack that's going to be raised over this pit but the Welsh dragon."

So there you have it. The 'new venture' is 'real socialism' not 'state capitalism', but also at the same time it is 'real nationalisation'. It also apparently combines the best spirit of both workers' internationalism and Welsh nationalism!

One of the miners on the other hand (not one of the new directors) had a more pragmatic view:

"I don't really feel I'm an owner of the pit. I don't see myself as a capitalist but as a lucky man who can go back to work at last after nine months."

Well fair enough - but for how long? At Monktonhall colliery a good deal further along the road with its own employee buyout they've just gone on a wildcat strike in a dispute very reminiscent of the old NCB days.

Slime in a suit

What's it all about then?

Certainly nationalisation either as part of the so-called 'mixed economy' or in its recently deceased full-blown form in Russia and Eastern Europe, has been no friend of the working class. It can as O'Sullivan initially suggested best be described as (one form of) "state capitalism", with all the usual trappings of money, markets, wages, profits and hierarchy.

Of course, O'Sullivan and his ilk fought to save nationalisation despite this, because they had a niche within the old system to protect. The revelation that it was really a load of crap only came after the battle had been lost and he'd got himself a new niche in the workers' company.

Nationalisation of the coal mines and other key industries in the past had its role to play, but for capitalism not the workers. As Victor Keegan, a supporter of past nationalisation put it:

"... because public ownership provided a humane and efficient umbrella for the rundown of the mines that would have been impossible to achieve with the old owners."

Well, we're not sure redundant miners and their families would agree with the 'humane' part of that, but you get the drift.

Apart from anything else, nationalisation in Britain involved generously buying out the old owners, largely with government bonds on which the state continued to pay interest. So profits in the re-structured industry went into the state coffers and then out again to the capitalists the state borrowed from. The new coal industry also continued to provide a secure source of power to the rest of capitalist industry in the post-war period and released capital investment for the reconstruction of other sectors of the economy.

So-called revolutionaries like Militant and the SWP of course saw through this and demanded 'nationalisation without compensation'. The fact is this would prove disastrous if carried out by an isolated national government, as a result of market isolation and military intervention. In the case of Russia where the state nationalised industry already taken over by the workers or abandoned by its capitalist owners, the party bureaucracy simply substituted itself

for the old bosses at the expense of the workers and then sent them off to fight a war on their behalf.

Mr. Blair and the Modernisers

When you think about it, that nice Mr. Blair is right - nationalisation is out of date. It served its purpose (for capitalism) in the past, but in a world of major economic power blocs, like the European Union, NAFTA and APEC etc. spanning many countries, and with industry hungry for huge sums of capital investment beyond the scope of nationally-based organisations to provide, nationalisation is a hindrance to the expansion of capital.

There's another problem though. Nationalisation (or public ownership, if you prefer) whether by the central or local state (sometimes called municipalisation) was dead useful to capitalism to get its own way, while kidding workers that they were on the road to socialism, or at least a 'fairer' society. Tories as much as Labour recognised the value of all this. There was pretty much a consensus between them in post-war Britain, backed up by the common assumptions of Keynesian economic philosophy.

Now they need to perform the same sort of trick without nationalisation, which is where the Tories' 'people's capitalism' and the Labour Party's re-definition of socialism and the debate on Clause 4 come in. We are witnessing the emergence of a new consensus.

The New Fools' Gold

We now find the Labour Party very interested in promoting employee ownership schemes. For inspiration, they are looking to the widespread systems of co-operative ownership in Europe, particularly in the agricultural sector, the employee ownership of industry in the USA (like TWA and North West Airlines) where some 10, 000 companies are at least partially owned by those who work in them and even to some older established systems in this country like the consumer Co-operative Society and the John Lewis Partnership. Other ideas about worker share options and worker directors are also being explored.

It's a short step from this to suggesting, as Andrew Bennett MP and the Guardian's Victor Keegan do that workers' investment in pension funds and more directly in the likes of British Gas etc. is already well on the way to some new form of social ownership.

Stephen Pollard, head of research for the Fabian Society (didn't they have something to do with the original clause 4?!) now says that, on paper at least, Britain already has 'common ownership' via the Pension and Insurance Fund Industry. Socialism really has come 'like a thief in the night' after all! Of course for Daily Mirror pensioners the thief wasn't 'socialism' but Robert Maxwell.

• Managed by the NCB - but certainly not on behalf of the people

Andrew Bennett, who by the way thinks it's a mistake to re-write clause 4, has already re-written it in his own mind by referring to "...shared ownerships" of the means of production, distribution and exchange" in line with the new philosophy.

Turning in his Grave

Peter Hain MP, being a bit more of an intellectual, tries his hand at providing a few historical precedents in support of the new approach when he says:

"An alternative libertarian socialism, embracing figures as diverse as William Morris, Tom Mann, Robert Owen and Noam Chomsky, stresses decentralised control, with decision making in the hands of producers and consumers."

Though his real reason for opposing nationalisation is the more mundane one of its "costing too much."

Hain obviously isn't a Radio 4 listener, otherwise he would have heard the serialisation of William Morris's "News from Nowhere" in which the view of Socialism as a moneyless, wageless, marketless society of free access is made quite clear. In this story of a futuristic society, the Houses of Parliament are put to good use as a store for manure. So in one sense at least things are the same - the contents of that place still stink!

Ownership and Control

Apparently behind Hain's support for New Labour's ideas is his belief that "control is as important as ownership" (in fact he opposes one to the the other). But this differentiation only makes sense if 'ownership' is perceived in a purely formal or legalistic sense. In the real world, ownership can only be defined in terms of control. Private ownership means exclusive control of something by a private individual, group or section of society to the exclusion of all others.

In Russia for instance, where the state used to own most industry and agriculture, the "people" were legally the owners, but it was the bureaucracy which had exclusive control of the means of production and therefore they who in PRACTICE owned the means of production.

Equally, a workers co-op whilst instituting common ownership amongst its members (if we ignore for

the moment the rights of its creditors), is a form of private ownership as against the rest of society.

So long as the relationship between workers co-ops (or any other forms of worker controlled units) is governed by money and the market or indeed by any means of equal EXCHANGE, then so long will people as a whole fail to exert conscious social control over society as a whole. So long as production remains primarily geared towards exchange on the market rather than towards directly satisfying peoples self-expressed needs them "common ownership of the means of production and distribution" will not have been achieved.

Furthermore, in time, the pressures of production for the market inevitably take their toll of any innovative attempts at equality within individual co-ops or other similar set-ups.

As an aside, you'll note that we don't talk about common ownership of the 'means of exchange' since as you have probably already gathered we consider this to be a totally contradictory statement. You can't exchange that which is held in common or the products of that held in common.

Thus, Clause 4 is in both theory and practice a statement of state capitalist aims and has nothing to do with socialism in its original sense. Labour's 'new' ideas are a just a mixture of traditional and worker-administered forms of capitalism regulated by the state. Just a different form of state capitalism really!

Just remember, painting America's TWA airline red didn't make it part of a communist transport system!

See also the following related texts:

'Pit Sense or No Sense' SUBVERSION 15

'Anarchist Economic?' SUBVERSION 12

'The End of Anarchism - workers and peasants collectives during the Spanish Civil War' SUBVERSION REPRINT

'Labouring in Vain' SUBVERSION PAMPHLET

[Extract from Guardian]

When opened, Siglo XX (20th century) was Bolivia's most modern mine. Its hospital was one of the best in the country and the company town even boasted a theatre.

Ten years ago Bolivia, crippled by 24,000 per cent inflation and crashing world tin prices, began a pioneer structural adjustment programme. It involved shrinking the state sector, balancing the books - and ignoring the social cost. All but three of the mines were closed, including Siglo XX, and 27,00 miners were laid off.

They faced a choice between moving to the slums around the capital, La Paz, to work as street vendors, or picking coca leaves. But 5,000 decided to set up a cooperative and continue working the mine.

One was Liborio Salvatierra, age 42, who says the clock has been turned back 100 years: "We had technology here, now we have to work manually. We had medical assistance and safety engineers, now there are accidents all the time. Gas collects because there's no ventilation, roofs collapse."

Mr. Salvatierra says that, when the cooperative was set up, the government promised technical and medical aid, and finance. But nothing came.

"They closed the mines because the miners were so well organised politically, we were the bulwark of the union movement, now they have marginalised us, we are no longer citizens," he says.

Subversion on Disc

If you'd like to receive text files of back issues of Subversion on computer disc, we can provide them. We have the last 6 issues available on disc, as well as our three pamphlets.

They are available on Mac or PC format.

If you want one, send a disc and £1.00 or no disc and £2.00 to our Manchester address.

The Animal Debate

The articles on the "animal question"on the two following pages are the resultof a debate which has been going on in SUBVERSION on a subject where we have a high level of disagreement.

Both articles are the views only of the individual members who wrote them.

However, there are large chunks of both articles that most of our members would agree with.

We expect these articles to set the cat among the pigeons, and participation in this debate from our readers is of course most welcome.

The debate continues inside SUBVERSION, and one point in particular where strong disagreement has been expressed since the articles were written is on point number 8 in the second article (HORSE SENSE, page 12).

Some members argued that you couldn't say animals murdered, raped, waged war or did anything that was *bad* at all since all of these are human concepts, which animals could not understand.

The author of the article responds that, as humans, we cannot stand outside our position in nature anymore than as workers we can stand outside our position in society (such attempts at "value free objectivity" are thought experiments of limited practical value). Both as workers and indeed as humans we have values which we impose on the universe.

The fact that animals may have no values and no understanding is irrelevant -what is important is the fact that we have them as humans.

(The animal rightist position criticised in the above mentioned point 8 is based on the same human-centric approach, whether they realise it or not!)

We have no doubt that the debate will continue!

Calf Wars ~ Veal Spiel

PAWS FOR THOUGHT

The sight of young,days old animals, stuffed into lorries and driven for hours before being unloaded onto boats and planes for delivery to other lorries and more miles, before ending up in veal crates and the like, is truly revolting.

It is hardly surprising that for thousands of angry people, often seeing the places they live in used for this trade, that merely grumbling about it is not enough. Their actions in trying to stop it are often brave and at times heroic, and it would be wrong of us to say otherwise.

If they gain nothing more from it, then they will at least learn some simple truths about the nature of the state and its police. No more will they be able to pretend that the police are there to protect them from crime. They will see that the police are there to protect the rights of property of capitalists.

Cruelty to any living thing is despicable and demeans those carrying it out. It brutalises and makes other cruel acts easier to carry out. This kind of trade is typical of a society which exists solely to screw as much profit out of every aspect of life as is possible. It is part of the way that capital makes our lives brutal, nasty and less than human. As such libertarian communists should oppose it. However,there are problems with the whole "animal rights" issue.

The first problem is xenophobia - the hatred of foreigners. This whole issue has got bound up with arguments about the way "the French" and "the Europeans" treat "our" animals. As such it runs parallell with the whole debate within the ruling class about the position of Britain within the EEC. It also forms a useful weapon for the state in negotiating its position in relation to other European states. It is an attitude which sells newspapers, which accounts for part of the reason that they have sided with the animal rights lobby. It is also hardly surprising that right-wing Tories have latched onto it. Alan Clarke, for example, is a vegetarian and was present at the funeral in Coventry, along with Bridget Bardot, of Jill Phipps, the woman killed by the lorry.

A second problem is that there is no such thing as rights, animal or human. The idea of inalienable rights is part of the lie that the state uses to justify its domination of society. It rests on the myth that we all agree to be ruled by the state and that we all have a stake in this society. The argument goes, that in exchange for giving up aspects of our freedom, for agreeing to let others decide how we live our lives, for accepting the domination of the bosses and bureaucrats, we are granted "human rights" which cannot be taken away.

This idea originated with capitalism, and was used as a justification for capitalists and MPs killing kings. Before that time there was no such notion.

The reality, of course, is that we have agreed to nothing. We are born as wage slaves and spend our lives struggling against the attempts of capital and the state to dominate evry aspect of our lives. What pass for "human rights" are a reflection of the state of the class struggle between bosses and workers. We have a "right" to organise because workers fought for it. We have a "right" to free speech because workers fought, were imprisoned and died for it. The same goes for everything else.

Animals are incapable of struggling for anything. If there are no "human rights" other than that which we have struggled for, how can there possibly be any such thing as "animal rights"? What there is,in reality,is human compassion.

Now, compassion may be a beautiful emotion, but we can think of not one single instance where compassion has led to significant social change. That comes when human beings act out of self-interest. When workers see that it is in their self-interest to do something then they act as a social class. It is then that social change occurs. This has been true for all history and will continue to be true in the future. Class struggle teaches workers that one person's individual self-interest can only be fulfilled when the self-interest of all is gratified. To argue otherwise is to lead people down a blind and futile alley, at the end of which can only be despair and demoralisation.

It is right to fight this trade because it makes our lives meaner and less fulfilling. But in doing so, workers must beware their false friends, in the press and the state, who want to use them for their own ends. We certainly cannot fight for the non-existent and impossible "rights" of animals.

For ourselves!

Auld Reekie

Continued from Page 7

of a booklet called 'Surviving on the Streets of Edinburgh' which is being distributed to homeless people.

Some of them used to sleep in the Centre, which now lies locked and empty, guarded around the clock by security firm heavies. When asked by journalists about the Centre's future, Cavenagh replied: "It's a secret".

Death to all politicians! La lutta continua!

Contact the Centre c/o Peace & Justice Centre, St John's, Princes Street, Edinburgh (mail only). Tel 0131 557 5846 (12-4, Mon-Fri).

BAMBI LIB!

HORSE SENSE: Fifteen Theses to Set the Fur Flying

1. Human beings do not have rights, and neither do animals. The concept of Rights is a mystical notion akin to religion, in that it involves a disembodied thing that exists "out there" that we all allegedly possess as part of our nature. Recognition by human beings of the supposed objective existence of these "Rights" then determines how we relate to each other, or how we should relate to each other, according to this belief.

2. But this is a superstitious belief, like belief in God, or the Tooth Fairy. As such, it serves to obfuscate, not to elucidate.

3. If for superstition we substitute fact we must say that Rights do not exist. All freedoms or gains that people have (had) were fought for. To the working class people who are the oppressed and exploited of present day society, we say: you have no Rights but you have a class interest - fight for it!

4. Animals cannot struggle. Indeed, they are totally incapable of recognising such a concept.

5. Humans struggle on their behalf. It can only ever be that way.

6. As working class revolutionaries we participate in social struggles on the basis of common class interest. But animals have no class interest. Any action taken on their humanitarianism.

7. This humanitarian attitude is an extension of our fellow-feeling for our own species. Accordingly, the more an animal ressembles us, the more people tend to regard it. This is the Bambi Syndrome - people like fluffy bunnies more than tarantulas.

8. Our predilection as a species for caring for the welfare of other species is an extremely rare quality in the animal kingdom as a whole. Contrary to the view of some of the nuttier animal rightists that humans are a blight on the Earth and that the "innocent animals" are so much better than us, it's the other way around - what animal would be capable of Humanitarian (sic) feeling or action on behalf of other species? What carnivorous animal would forego meat, even if it were able? What are the (supposedly human) vices that do not exist (often in more virulent form) among other species? Murder? Carnivores and others do it. Rape? Orang utans do it. Warfare? Chimpanzees do it, with extreme brutality.

The fact is that humans are on the whole BETTER than the other species we share the planet with. Ironically, are animal activists themselves not living, two-legged proof of this?

9. The fact that animals are INFERIOR to humans, in the above way as in other ways, does not mean that we should disregard them, or ignore their welfare.

10. There are a number of different issues involved in the treatment of animals, which have different solutions: a: Blood sports b: Medical testing c: Other testing d: Food, clothing and the like e: Unnecessary cruelty in b through d above.

11. These issues shade between at one extreme blood sports, which are pure sadism with no possible justification, through non-medical testing (e.g. for cosmetics) which few people other than the most callous would justify, through medical experiments which can be argued to be justified in principle if they avert human death and misery, at least until alternatives exist (the fact that much testing may be medically unnecessary is a separate issue), to use of animals for food etc. which has been part of our "nature" (inasmuch as such a thing exists) for as long as humans (or semi-humans) have been on the planet, and which nearly everyone accepts.

12. Whereas the demise of blood sports may come in the relatively near future, use of animals for food can only realistically be expected to disappear as a result of technological and social change: in a future socialist society there will be not only the technological advance of proper, nutritious and appetising meat substitutes that will exist by then (if not sooner) but also the ability of society as a whole to make rational decisions about what it does, rather than letting everything be determined by what's profitable for the capitalists. Under capitalism, animal use will never end if it's profitable.

13. If you want a veg(etari)an society, then, support the struggle to establish Socialism! And stop bothering ordinary working classs people who eat meat in the here and now, many of whom find it hard through the circumstances of their life to go "veggy" (and who already have enough to worry about!).

14. The treatment of animals is only INDIRECTLY a class issue: e.g. sadism has no place in a socialist society and people who engage in blood sports are scum who deserve to die. But activism on this issue is only worth doing if there's nothing more important going on - i.e. class struggle!

15. As was said above, concern for animals is a Humanitarian issue, and there is nothing at all wrong with that, so let's proclaim it as such unashamedly. But let's not confuse it with class interest, class solidarity and class struggle.

Class of 95
Workplace or Community?

We received two letters around the theme of community and workplace struggle from two of our regular contacts operating under the titles of Trotwatch and Communist Headache.
We publish here an extract from the first with a short reply:

Dear Subversion,

Thanks for issues 14 and 15 of the paper - nearly all of which have now been distributed. A lot of good stuff in both. I'd like to talk to you more about your particular class theory. Despite what maybe something of a conflict of emphasis between the Revolutionaries in the Workplace article, and your editorial reply to Mark in the current issue, I understand that, generally speaking, you perceive workplace struggles as the primary site of class struggle: because this is the place where surplus value is extracted. I'm not convinced by the apparently inherent distinctions which you see as separating and distinguishing work from community struggles, however. And while a vast amount of capitalist bollox (both academic and populist) has been churned out about the much maligned and feared underclass, I think you dismiss the idea a little out of hand.

The nature of employment, the organisation of work, and the management of the workforce are, without doubt, currently being re-shaped. Some of the changes the capitalist class is seeking are being contested - sometimes more consciously so than others - other changes are being forced through in the face of minimal opposition, despite the potentially devastating impact that they threaten.

Its not necessary to accept the post-Fordist class-is-dead bollox to understand that if the nature of capitalist work is being overhauled (evidenced by the growth pf part-time work; team working; short term contracting; sub contracting; the growth of personal contracts; the loss of long-term security for many workers; the emergence in some sectors of a core-periphery split amongst workers employed by an operation) then the structure of the working class - and relations between sections of it - may also be redefined as these materials conditions change. In light of this, I think it would be useful for you to discuss the controversy of the underclass more fully in a future issue. You may of course argue that the real spread of such changes is minimal, and that growth of long term unemployment and precarious temporary work is more the result of cyclical rather than structural changes in western capitalism. Whatever, I'd like to see you elaborate your critique.

Trotwatch

REPLY:

The issues you raise were the subject of much discussion at recent SUBVERSION meetings. We are still a long way from drawing definite conclusions but there are some points we'd like to make.

You rightly detect some differences, at least in emphasis, in various articles that have appeared in SUBVERSION recently.

Our starting point is a recognition that it is the division between the working class - those excluded from control of the means of production and exploited by the minority capitalist class, which does control the means of production, which is at the heart of the contradictions of modern society .

It is the struggle between these two classes (alongside and connected to the struggle between different groups of capitalists) which is the motor of change in capitalism and which provides the potential for its revolutionary overthrow and the creation of a communist society.

However the nature and composition of the working class has changed over time in the process of this struggle, and is set to change still further. To be effective as a conscious revolutionary minority we need to better understand these changes. Ignoring for the moment the misplaced use of the term community, it is our view that the polarised community versus workplace debate is false and misleading.

There is a strong case to be made for understanding the whole of the capitalist physical terrain, as the workplace, in so far as production has become more physically dispersed while at the same time more socially integrated.

To illustrate this simply, take a situation where one workplace might contain integrated production, from design, through processing, transport to sale and incorporating in-house training and medical attention etc, to a situation where each of these elements is carried out by different organisations in widely different locations, the workers none-the-less remain part of the same process contributing to the same end product.

In a broad sense capitalist production is much more social in practice than ever before. Thus the whole of the working class is exploited by the whole of the capitalist class in a very real way - it isn't just a marxist theoretical abstraction. Process workers, transport workers, teachers, hospital workers, communications workers, houseworkers etc etc all play a part in the production and reproduction of capital.

But of course struggle in practice has to start somewhere, either in a particular workplace or a particular geographical area. Whatever the starting point, it is important both for limited gains in the short run and ultimately for the revolutionary overthrow of the system, for struggles to extend both geographically and socially. It is the socially integrated nature of capitalism as described above which provides the material basis for struggles to extend and change character in the process - to become revolutionary.

Has the socially integrated nature of capitalism and the common interests of the working class as a whole been broken by the emergence of a so-

called underclass? In parts of Africa, South America and elsewhere, huge numbers of people have been driven off the land through war, famine and commercialisation onto the fringes of major urban connurbations. None of this is new, but capitalism has found it more and more difficult to integrate these people into the production process and in some cases has created generations who have no experience of wage labour.

For those in the worst conditions such as some of the semi-permanent refugee camps, it is difficult to see any collective struggle emerging that might form the spark of anything wider. On the other hand, there is experience of collective struggle among some of the shanty town dwellers of South Africa which are more hopeful.

In Europe, North America and elsewhere there has also been a growth of long term unemployment, often concentrated in certain inner-city areas and extending to second generations. Whilst there are some similarities between the situation of these two groups of people, there are important differences. Firstly in numbers, the long term unemployed here are a much smaller proportion of the working class. They are also still at this stage more socially integrated into the wider working class. Ironically it is precisely the extension of more general insecurity among the working class through the extension of short-time working, part-time working, temporary contracts,home-working etc combined with the states social programmes which may well limit the growth of any permanent hard-core group of long term unemployed.

These same trends may well also see a shift in emphasis from mass struggles focussed on the individual workplace to a more generalised geographical focus, although at this moment in time there are still, across the world, plenty of large workplaces that will continue to provide important starting points of struggle.

Clearly some groups of workers are more likely to enter into struggle than others at particular points in time. Equally some struggles have more potential to extend than others, depending on their objective relationship to the process of capitalist production and reproduction.

It seems to us that broadly speaking struggles focussed on work, wages and working conditions and on the social wage, whether in the form of benefits or services in kind will continue to be the backbone of class struggle.

In the past and up to the present day these struggles have taken the form of strikes, riots, occupations, rent strikes, mass boycotts and non-payments etc. New forms of struggle may arise reflecting the charging nature of work and its physical location.

Struggles focussed on other issues such as opposition to road building (the arteries of the production process) have less obvious potential for extension - though argument among revolutionaries on this still rages (see Aufheben no. 3 for a discussion of this).

At the other extreme for instance the opposition to live cattle exports, whatever you think of it, is clearly quite peripheral to the development of mass opposition to capitalism.

It also seems true that the more peripheral a struggle, not only is there less potential for extension on a class basis, but the opposite is true, they are more open to co-optation for capitalist interests.

The issue, in summary, is not where a struggle starts but what is its potential for extension geographically and socially - what is its potential to influence the wider class movement.

See also: New Technology and the Changing Composition of the Working Class. (Next issue)

For previous discussion of some of these issues see SUBVERSION issues number 12, 13, 14 and 15, still available from the group address.

Friends and neighbours:

If you liked **Subversion** then why not read **ORGANISE!**, paper of the Anarchist Communist Federation, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

COMMUNIST HEADACHE, PO Box 446, Sheffield S1 1NY

Some communists in Liverpool can be contacted at: PO Box 182, Liverpool L69 1UU

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Subversion

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REPORTS: NORTHERN ANARCHISTS AND REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISTS?

During January last, members of SUBVERSION attended two conferences in the north of England.

The first, in Manchester, was advertised as a launch meeting for the Northern Anarchist Network. We argued, with some support from a member of the A.C.F., that useful practical co-operation could only be based on agreeing some basic revolutionary political positions. Unfortunately, this approach was rejected. While we had expected opposition to this from members of the East Midland Anarchist Federation, whom from past experience we know to be dominated by liberal and leftist ideology, the small majority of class struggle, anarchist-communists present were also sadly unwilling to support us. Although participants clearly thought it worthwhile organising a meeting separate from single issue campaigns and the general swamp of radical politics, they ended up being unable or unwilling to define exactly how they differed from the rest.

Having lost our main argument, we did our best to ensure that the new network at least provided some space for genuine political debate, but we doubt if it will end up being anything more than an information exchange.

The second conference we attended was the fourth national conference of the Revolutionary Socialist Network held in Wigan. This network was originally set up in the wake of the collapse of the Eastern Block regimes and the general confusion this caused among leftwingers. It was a genuine attempt by some to open up debate and discussion amongst those from widely differing political backgrounds, who all none-the-less were willing to challenge the old orthodoxies of the left. As such it initially attracted not only ourselves but a wide spectrum of people from anarchists and left communists, through disillusioned Labour and trade union supporters to ex-Stalinsists.

Unfortunately, many who continued to attend the meetings were in the end more interested in finding new reasons to support re-packaged left-wing dogma than to genuinely re-examine, in a radical way, their previous ideas and practices.

The Wigan Conference was not only smaller than the previous three, but even more dominated by esoteric groups of neo-trotskyists and holier-than-thou, rank and file trade union types.

The Network may struggle on but genuine revolutionary socialists will need to look elsewhere for means to debate and co-operate together.

The following is a leaflet we distributed at the RSN conference. It could perhaps have been just as useful at the Anarchist Conference:

"THE REVOLUTIONARY ALTERNATIVE TO LEFT WING POLITICS."

THE REVOLUTIONARY ALTERNATIVE TO LEFT-WING POLITICS

****

The Left has not failed. And that is one of the greatest disasters ever to befall the working class.

Most people think that the Left is the movement of the working class for socialism (albeit riven by opportunism and muddle-headed interpretations on the part of many in its ranks).

Nothing could be further from the truth.

We in Subversion (and the wider movement of which we are a part) believe that left-wing politics are simply an updated version of the bourgeois democratic politics of the French revolution, supplemented by a state-capitalist economic programme.

Consider:

In the French revolution, the up and coming capitalist class were confronted not only by the old order, but also by a large and growing urban plebeian population (the working class in formation, artisans, petty traders and the like), who had their own genuine aspirations for freedom from oppression, however incoherent.

Bourgeois democracy was the device that enabled the capitalist class to disguise their own aspirations for power as the liberation of everyone outside the feudal power structure.

The notion of the People (as though different classes, exploiters and exploited, could be reduced to a single entity) was thus born.

The notion of Equality and the notion of Rights possessed by all presented a fictitious view of society as a mass of individuals who all stood in the same relations to the law - completely ignoring the difference between the property owners and those whose labour they exploit.

And, above all, the notion of the Nation - that the oppressed class should identify with those of their opressors who live in the same geographical area or speak the same language, and see as alien those of our class who are on the other side of "national borders".

By means of this imaginary view of society, capitalism was able to dominate the consciousness of the newly forming working class. Bourgeois democracy is the biggest con in history.

Consider also:

As capitalism developed more and more, the material position of the working class forced it to engage in struggle despite its bourgeois consciousness - thus enabling this consciousness to be undermined.

The existing capitalist regimes often came to be hated. Thus there was a need for a more radical version of bourgeois democracy with a more specifically working class image. Left wing politics fulfulled this role in the 19th and 20th centuries, first in the form of Social Democracy or Labourism and then in the form of Bolshevism: Both of these variants managed to dress up support for capitalism in working class language, and became major players in the full development of capitalism (this was especially true in Russia, where State Capitalism, introduced by the Bolsheviks, a supposedly working class party, was the only way capitalism could be developed.

So what does Leftism consist of?

At first blush it seems to be about supporting the struggle of the workers, but when you look more closely everything is on the terrain of capitalist politics. The main features of Leftism are:

Support for radical capitalist parties

Such as the Labour Party in this country and the ANC in South Africa (precisely because its goal is to widen bourgeois democracy - the vote etc.),and support for **Parliament**. Some "revolutionary" groups who don't support the Labour Party nevertheless still support participation in parliament - thereby helping in practice to uphold the ideology of bourgeois democracy.

Support for State Capitalism

Already referred to above, State Capitalism (a term with various meanings, but here we mean the form of society that developed in Russia and its imitators) collects all property into the hands of the state. And this is a capitalist state, not a "workers' state" because capitalist property relations still exist - wage labour, money, the market - and of course the workers do not control the state. The state, indeed, confronts the workers as the "collective capitalist", extracting surplus value from them for the ruling bureaucrats, who are themselves the "collective bourgeoise".

Let us be clear about this: the only way capitalism can be dismantled is for the working class to immediately abolish money and the market, and distribute goods according to need (albeit with scarce goods being rationed for a time if necessary). Those who argue that this cannot be done immediately are in fact arguing for retaining the very core of capitalist social relations - if that is done the revolution is as good as dead.

The idea that state capitalism is not capitalism doesn't merely justify support for anti-working class dictatorships like Russia, China, Cuba etc., but creates the very real danger of such a society being created in any future revolution.

Support for Nationalism in its "radical" form

Left wing groups routinely advocate support for weaker, e.g. "third world", nation states - meaning the governments of nation states, against stronger ones (Iraq in the Gulf War, etc.). This is described as anti-imperialism (!) as though the victory of the weaker country would do more than slightly alter the ranking of states within the world imperialist pecking order. Imperialism is a historical stage of capitalism and opposing it, as opposed to opposing capitalism itself via working class revolution, is meaningless.

The most common form of this "radical" nationalism consists of so-called "national liberation movements", such as the IRA, who don't yet have state power. As soon as they do come to power they always crush the working class - that is, of course, the nature of bourgeois state power.

Often the line will be used that, even if one disapproves of nationalism, that nevertheless nations have a right to self-determination, and one must support their rights. A purer example of bourgeois democratic double-talk could not be imagined: Rights are not something that actually exists, but are a bourgeois mystification (see above). The working class should not talk about its rights but about its class interest. Talking about a right to national "self-determination" (as though a geographical grouping of antagonistic classes can be a "self"!) is like saying that workers have a "right" to be slaves if they want to, or a "right" to beat themselves over the head with a hammer if they want to. Anyone who supports the "right" to something anti-working class is actually helping to advocate it, whatever their mealy-mouthed language.

Siding with the working class against all capitalist factions necessitates opposing all forms of nationalism whatsoever. Any wobbling on this will lead the working class to defeat yet again.

Support for Trade Unionism

Seemingly the most working class activity of all, Trade Unionism is above all a movement to reconcile the workers to capitalism. Its stated aim is to get workers the best deal within capitalism, but it's not even that:

The mass of workers have bourgeois consciousness, but because capitalism forces them to struggle, they can resist despite that consciousness and thereby begin to change that consciousness.

Struggles of the working class are the seeds of revolutionary change. But because Trade Unions are made up of the mass of workers (with bourgeois consciousness) and exist all the time - i.e. when there's no class struggle (and although the day-to-day life of workers can well be called a struggle, we are of course talking about collective struggle) the said Unions inevitably fail to challenge capitalism, and furthermore become dominated by a clique of bureaucrats who rise above the passive mass of workers. These bureaucrats get their livelihood from the day-to-day existence within capitalism that is Trade Unionism. They are thus materially tied to it. That is why when struggle breaks out, the Union machine sabotages it and stabs workers in the back in the time honoured tradition. This will always be the case - the workers can never sieze the unions. The very nature of Trade Unionism produces anti-working class bureaucratic control.

We believe the workers must create new structures, controlled from the bottom up, to run every struggle that occurs, outside and against the Unions, if the struggle is to go forward. Left wing groups' support for Trade Unions is just one more way in which they help shackle the working class to capitalism.

And last but certainly not least, advocacy of the Leadership of "revolutionaries" over the working class

This division between a mass of followers and an elite of leaders mirrors the divide in mainstream capitalism (and indeed all forms of class society) between rulers and ruled, and serves well the project of constructing state capitalism, after the future revolution.

None of this means that all workers will come simultaneously to revolutionary ideas, because to begin with only a minority will be revolutionaries, but their task is to argue their case with the rest of their fellow workers as equals.

What the left do however, is to perpetuate the sheep-like mentality workers learn under capitalism and harness it to their aim to be in charge after the revolution. We say that if anyone is in charge, if the working class does not lead itself, and consciously build a new society, then it will fare no better than in Russia and China and all the rest.

We believe that all left wing groups, whether Stalinist or Trotskyist (or Maoist or Anarchist or whatever they call themselves) are merely radical capitalist organisations who, if they ever came to power, would erect new state capitalist dictatorships in the name of the very working class they would proceed to crush.

This is not a matter of the subjective intentions of their members, whose sincerity we are not questioning here, but the objective result of their policies.

This is why the Left has not failed. Its aim was never more than to save capitalism by disguising it as something it was not - just as the original form of bourgeois democracy did in an earier age.

In opposition to the Left there exists a political movement, consisting of both groups and individuals, some of whom might call themselves Communists, while some might call themselves Anarchists (the Marxist-Anarchist split is an outdated historical division that bears no relationship to the real class line, which cuts across it), but who all stand united against the fake radicalism of the Left, and for a genuinely communist alternative. We in SUBVERSION are a part of this movement.

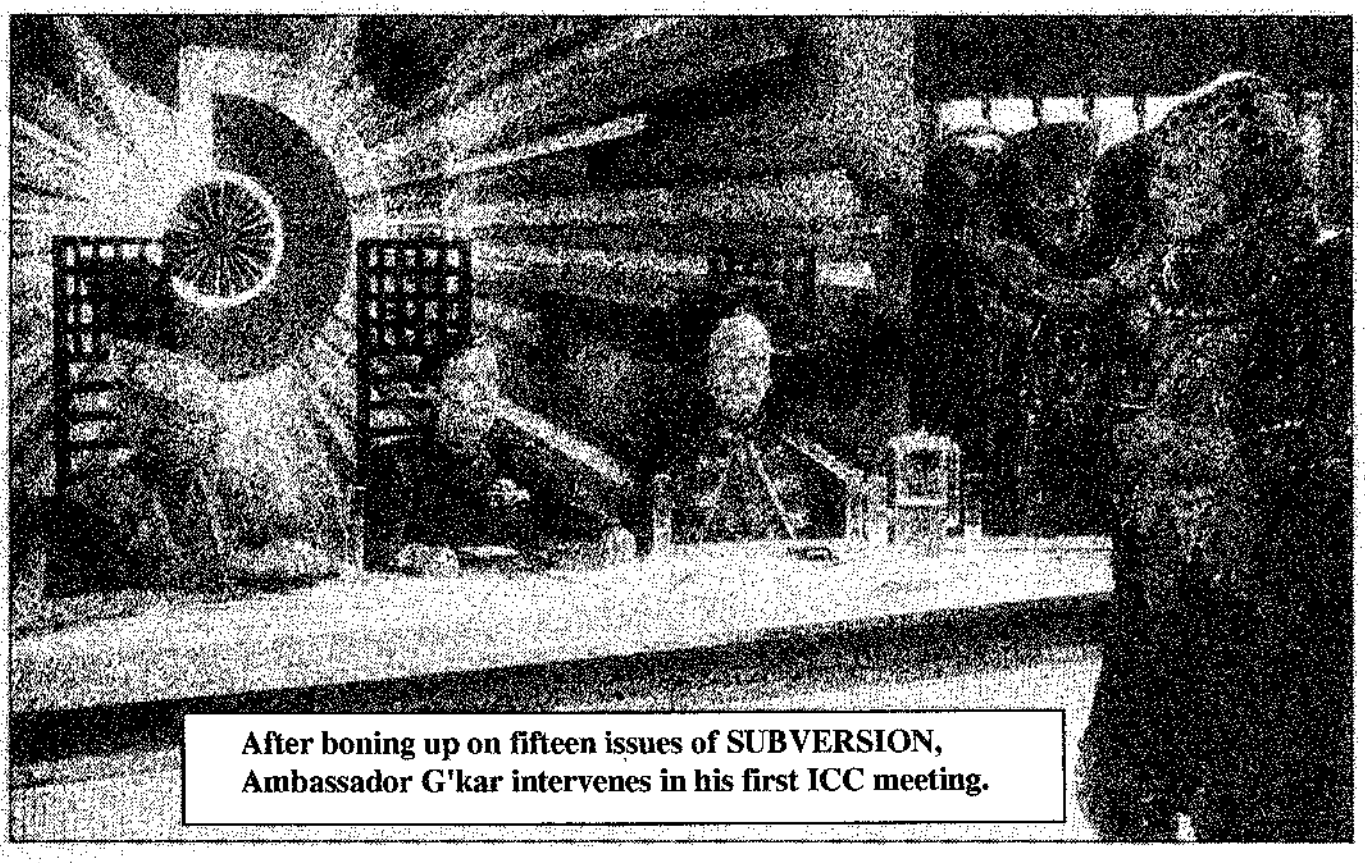
What is the Alternative?

We believe that, despite the obstacles put in its way by both Right and Left, the working class has the power to destroy capitalism for real, and create a society without classes, without the state, national boundaries, oppression or inequality. A society not based on money or other forms of exchange, but on collective ownership of, and free access to, all society's goods on the part of the whole of humanity.

This society, which we call Communism or Socialism or Anarchism interchangeably, will be the first truly free society ever to exist.

The social movement that will create this society will grow from the existing struggles of the working class. As part of this process, our class must surmount the barriers put in its way by bourgeois ideology, including left wing ideology. Our task in SUBVERSION is not to be leaders (see above), but to be part of the process of creation of a revolutionary working class movement that will put an end to our world's long history of oppression and exploitation, and begin the long history of the free, world human community to come.

If you would like to contact us, or receive a copy of our magazine SUBVERSION, then write to: Dept. 10, 1 Newton St., Piccadilly, Manchester M1 1HW.



After boning up on fifteen issues of SUBVERSION, Ambassador G'kar intervenes in his first ICC meeting.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

We meet regularly for political discussion and to organise our activities. The following is a brief description of our basic political principles:

- We are against all forms of capitalism; private, state and self-managed.

- We are for communism, which is a classless society in which all goods are distributed according to needs and desires.

- We are actively opposed to all ideologies which divide the working class, such as religion, sexism and racism.

- We are against all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" movements such as the IRA.

- The working class (wage labourers, the unemployed, housewives, etc.) is the revolutionary class; only its struggle can liberate humanity from scarcity, war and economic crisis.

- Trade unions are part of the capitalist system, selling our labour power to the bosses and sabotaging our struggles. We support independent working class struggle, in all areas of life under capitalism, outside the control of the trade unions and all political parties.

- We totally oppose all capitalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. We are against participation in fronts with these organisations.

- We are against participation in parliamentary elections; we are for the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class and the establishment of organisations of working class power.

- We are against sectarianism, and support principled co-operation among revolutionaries.

- We exist to actively participate in escalating the class war towards communism

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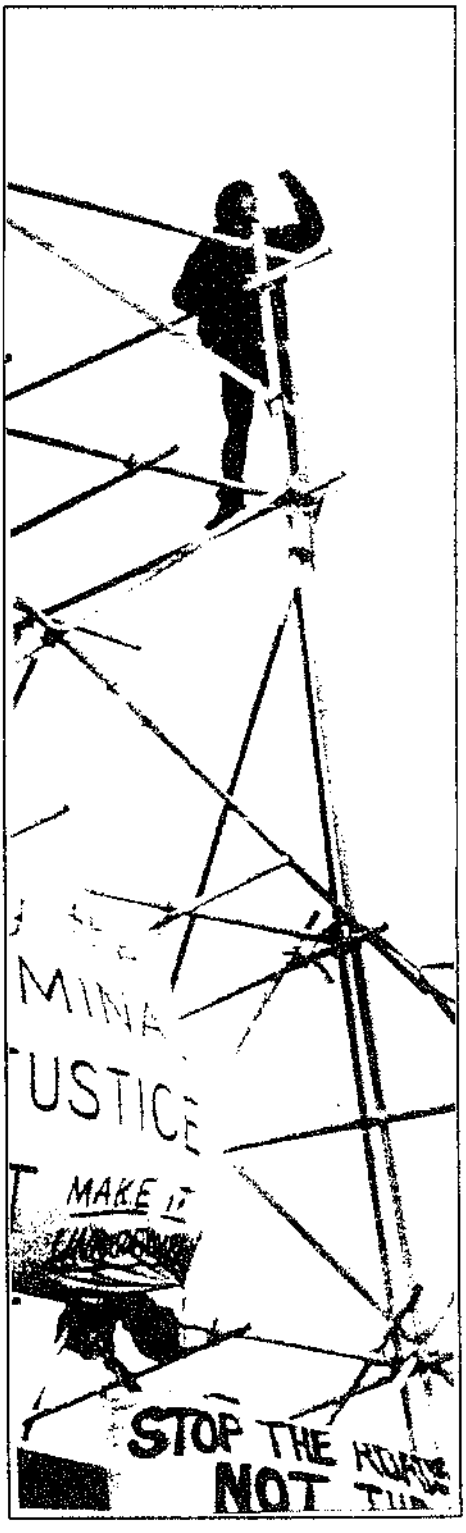
Subversion,

Dept 10, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M11HW

Subversion

Issue 17 FREE!

The Class Struggle goes on the road.



In this issue:

*** The Changing State...**

...and the Changing Working Class.

*** The Animals debate continues.**

*** And more!**

Plus:
Is OJ innocent?
See back page!

ABOUT OURSELVES

Who we are....

SUBVERSION is a revolutionary organisation which draws on the best elements of both the Anarchist and Marxist traditions. We define ourselves as being anti-state, anti-market communists.

Unlike the great bulk of so-called socialists, communists and anarchists who in our view aim at nothing more than a "radical" version of capitalism, dressed up in revolutionary language, we in Subversion believe in:

· A society without classes, national boundaries, inequality, exploitation or oppression of any kind.

· A society without commodity production, markets or money, where all production is for human need and all goods are free to everyone.

· A society where for the first time in history humanity can take control of its own destiny;

We believe the only route to such a society is that of worldwide revolution by working class people. The small struggles of today (strikes, anti-roads actions, mass raids on supermarkets like in Brazil, squatting and anti-rent actions etc.) are the seeds which contain the potential for a revolutionary movement powerful enough to take on capitalism.

The barriers to this are the fact that people are subjected all their lives to ideas in favour of the existing system, the lack of confidence in our ability to change things, and, not least, that when people are looking for change they are confronted with left-wing bogus revolutionaries to lead them down blind alleys.

Subversion sees its task as both participating in the struggles of today and putting forward genuinely revolutionary ideas.

Unlike the would-be leaders of the Left, we do not seek "followers" but aim at the creation of a conscious, revolutionary working class - a movement of equals.

In this spirit, we cooperate in a non-sectarian way with other revolutionary organisations (or individuals), both in the practical activities of class struggle and also in the development of revolutionary ideas and understanding.

What we do.....

We have members in Manchester, Oldham, Leeds and near London.

We meet regularly to discuss politics, to plan this magazine and other written material and to discuss the activities we have been involved in and the ones we hope to be involved in in the future.

At the moment we are active where we work, fighting the M66 and prisoner support. We have been part of a number of efforts to bring revolutionaries together and will continue to do so. In Manchester, we are trying to bring class struggle communists and anarchists together.

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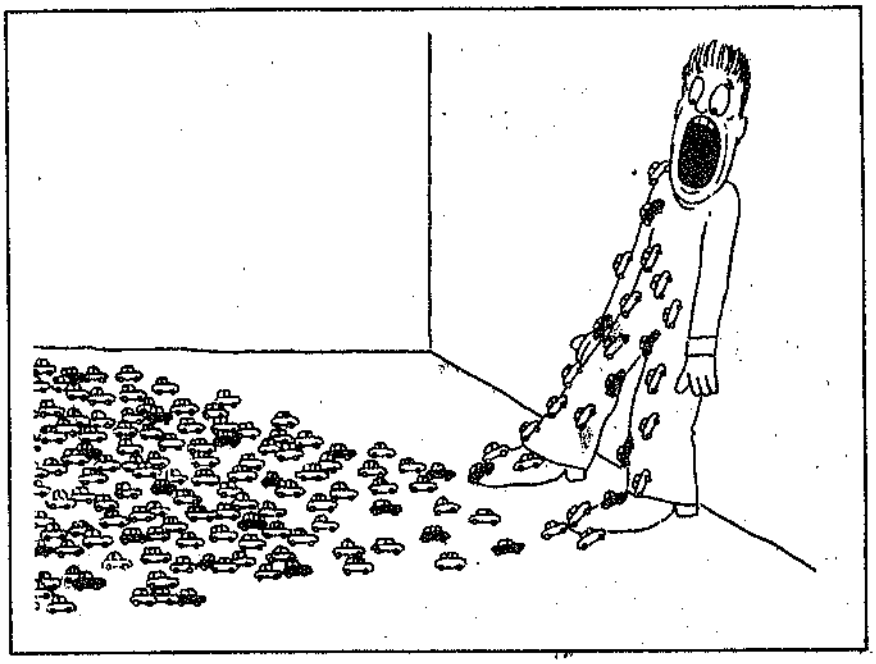
Class struggle hits the road .....

Motorway Madness

Part 1. The M66.



Motorway madness has finally come to Manchester. The latest phase of the state's scheme to "modernise" the road network is the completion of the ring round Manchester. This is taking the form of the extension to the M66.
This development cuts through fields, parks, schools and areas of housing. The council estate at Hollinwood, Oldham was turned into a dust bowl as the bulldozers and pile-drivers moved in. Residents found that work started at 7am every morning and carried on as long as it was light. Two local schools stood to loose chunks of their playing fields and one its gym. Streets of good housing were demolished. For many local people, the final straw was when they realised that this road was to go through Daisy Nook Country Park in the Medlock Valley. Predictably, this is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and is stunningly beautiful!

As Well as threatening these areas, the motorway threatens to devastate other parts of Oldham and Rochdale. The building involves cuttings. The spoil from these will has to be dumped. Old quarries have been reopened to take care of this. Another plan is to dump in the Beale Valley, Oldham. This is an open area at the bottom of Sholver council estate. Having destroyed this area where local kids play, the council say they will reopen it in ten years time - as a golf course, for which local people will have to pay to use!

The fight back began when local activists called a picnic at Daisy Nook in June. Originally intended to test feeling, this was immediately transformed into a permanent camp. Over the summer an increasing number of, mostly local, people got involved. Their numbers were strengthened by a small number of eco-warriors.

Since the start of the camp there have been a number of successful actions against the motorway. Work on the Hollinwood site has been stopped on more than one occasion, much to the satisfaction of local residents who have felt powerless in dealing with this menace. Knowledge of the issues involved is spreading throughout the area.

Work on the motorway is progressing slowly. The contracts for the Daisy Nook development have not been awarded yet and work there is not expected until next spring.

Some of us have been involved in supporting the camp and we intend to continue to do so and fight the motorway as best we can. Any of our readers wanting to know more should phone the No M66 Campaign, 0161 627 4862.

Part 2. Why are motorways important?

So why is the struggle against the state's plans for motorway expansion important?

If we are to believe the Leninist Left or the "Left Communists", it is a side issue to the "real" struggles in the workplace. If we take the views of greens at face value, then it is a struggle for sanity against motorway madness.

It is our contention that the struggle against the motorways is an important aspect of the class struggle today.

This is true for many reasons.

Expand or die....

It is beyond the scope of this article to explain why, but capital (and the economy of nation states) quite literally needs to expand or die. When the government talk about expanding the economy being essential to the needs of Britain, they are quite literally

stating the truth as far as capitalism is concerned.

An economy that does not "grow" cannot compete with its rivals. A company that does not constantly seek to cut costs and boost profit margins will see itself going to the wall. One of the main needs of capital; whether local, national or international is to drive down costs.

One simple way to drive down costs is to reduce the time it takes to make something. This means that investments are quickly turned into profits. The production process divides into two parts: production, and distribution. Distribution includes selling things and getting raw materials to factories and then the products to wholesalers and shops. A more "efficient" transport system (in terms of the time taken), a quicker turnover, means that the transformation of investment into profit is quicker too. Less is spent on storage, less on waiting. Money is available more quickly to buy the next lot of raw materials, to transport them, to make new products and then to move them again to sell them.

The need to cut down this time means at present that more and faster roads are constantly needed.

Just In Time

A good example of this is the delivery of materials according to the "Just-in-Time" principle.

Before the advent of the motorway network, factories all had large warehouses which stored the components needed in the production process. This was very costly as considerable investment sat around "doing nothing" until it was needed. The growth of computerisation changed this. Now it is possible for a factory to know exactly when a particular component is needed. A sub-contractor can be told to deliver on such-and-such a date, at such-and-such a time. Now there is no need for large warehouses. In effect the lorries have become mobile warehouses constantly moving on the motorway network. As a result, multinational companies are able to produce components where they can do so most efficiently. Thus if one needs labour intensive production it can be done where labour is cheapest, if it is hi-tech, then somewhere like Germany is preferable. The motor industry typifies this approach.

Not only are motorways needed to distribute materials to factories, they are also needed to circulate commodities. This includes the commodity that each of us has to sell, our labour power. Put it another way, capitalism needs roads to get us to work! These are often not motorways, but are urban routes that make life hell for those living near them and drive us mad trying to use them. As part of this, the car industry is probably the most important industry in developed economies, with interests of its own that it has the power to push.

Crazy Carrots

The growth of bar-codes has led to this spreading to the food industry. No longer to supermarkets source their products locally. Instead it is cheaper for them to centralise packing at one point, to distribute to warehouses for redistribution to individual supermarkets as their computer generated models predict the food is needed. A recent Granada TV programme showed carrots being produced in Suffolk, transported to Preston for packing, then to Hertfordshire for loading onto lorries, before being delivered to a store in Ipswich - over 700 miles to do a 20 mile journey! Nonetheless it is more profitable to do this.

Euro-Roads

The European Union talks about an "Internal Market". What the EU wants is to integrate the various local and national capitals into one whole, the better to compete with other global capitals. "Efficient" communications is a vital part of this process. The talk is of a European Route Network. This allows for the greater efficiency of transport moving around the EU. To do this roads must be upgraded and widened - like the M6, M1, M42 and now the M66. Projects like the Channel Tunnel are undertaken with the eventual aim of providing a network linking Europe from Cork to Moscow.

A hundred years ago, production on the whole took place locally. Raw materials may have been imported, but power was locally produced (from coal), components were either produced on site or locally. This is no longer true. "Just-in-time", the roads and computers mean that everything is spread out to where it can be produced most cheaply. The various states take on the role of providing the warehouses, in the form of the road networks. In a sense, the whole of society has become the factory. Everywhere we go we are confronted with it, nowhere are we free from it.

So the road network is important for the current needs of modern capitalism. Unfortunately, those needs are in direct contrast to our needs. We need peace, quiet, fresh air and open spaces. All of these are threatened by the roads. We need good health - instead we get asthma. We need safe places for our kids - instead we are forced to keep them off the streets for fear of accidents. Over 4500 people a year die in Britain alone due to roads, worldwide the figure is nearer to one million. Our whole lives are becoming dominated by the needs of the roads and the motor industry.

When we fight back against road development we are hitting at capitalism's expansion needs. That is why the struggle is at the bottom a class struggle - a struggle by working class people against the needs of capital to dominate every aspect of our lives. By fighting the roads we are beginning the struggle to assert our own needs, a struggle that must eventually lead to the overthrow of this whole rotten system.

Footnote: If you want to read a more detailed analysis of the struggles against motorways, then we recommend you read Aufheben. *Issues 3 and 4 contain excellent articles. They cost £2.00 each. Write to Aufheben c/o Prior House, Tilbury Place, Brighton, BN2 2GY.*

Friends and neighbours

If you like Subversion, why not have a look at these other mags?

Organise! Journal of the Anarchist Communist Federation. c/o 84b, Whitechapel High St., London E1 7QX

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If you live near **Liverpool**, you can contact some local communists at: **PO Box 182**, Liverpool L69 1UU

In **Sheffield**, write to: **Communist Headache**, PO Box 446, Sheffield S1 1NY

The Chiapas and the Zapatistas.

Some comrades in Greece have sent us a long article, written after one of them visited the Chiapas region in Mexico. We can supply photocopies of it, send £1.50 for a copy.

They also sent us an article on Macedonia and the former Yugoslavia. For copies, send £1.20.

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DON'T TRUST JOURNALISTS

The following two articles come from the pages of past issues of ***Proletarian Gob***. Proletarian Gob is written by one member of Subversion. You can find his address elsewhere in this issue. We think they go together well and should provide a suitable warning about the activities of journalists and the state.

You only have to read the newspapers or watch the television news to realise what a stupid and nasty bunch of gits journalists, newsreaders, commentators, and their camera operators are.

They only tell us half the story; they repeat police reports, or press releases; they are lazy; they sensationalise; they lie; they pester people; they are smug and ugly.

The "News" is very important to our rulers, not because it provides information (it hardly ever provides useful or important information, and if something useful is reported it is usually well after the event) but because it keeps us distracted, fills our heads with crap, and over and over again sell lies to us. The "news" is not news, but propaganda. However, this propaganda is fairly subtle and complex, most journalists are so stupid they don't even know they are peddling it. There is not just one "line" but several competing ones. What this means is that we are encouraged to agree with an opinion (or line) within a set framework, we can choose to favour any variations on a left wing stance or a right wing stance, but we are not allowed to go beyond that.

For example, the right wing will say that striking workers should not have attacked the police, the left wing will say that the police provoked them or started it. No one will be saying that attacking the police in general is a positive thing.

Again, we are constantly meant to think about the best ways to run the economy, we aren't meant to think that we would be better off ***without*** an economy.

In general, journalism is a job in which you have to start at the bottom and work your way up - if you can't stomach what journalism is about you'll jack it in or get the push long before you're working on The Guardian, or reading News At Ten. If you don't want to report the school fete in the local newspaper, or pester the families of murder victims for a few comments and tears to sell your newspaper and keep your wages coming in then your career won't go far. It's easier for journalists to write in cliches, they can't spend two weeks writing one article, and they've got to be punchy. The news is a soap opera - written to formula and full of lessons for us about things like law and order, the family, etc.

By the time a journalist has become established in our great democracies they are fully self-censoring propaganda machines, as reliable for the State and the bosses as officially controlled journalists in a totalitarian regime. But this doesn't mean we should feel sorry for the poor lobotomised dears, journalists are far more dangerous and powerful than the average police officer. Attacks and military offensives in places like Bosnia and Somalia are often effectively directed by media reporting. Here police attacks/clampdowns are prompted by journalists.

The sight of journalists in "war torn" or "famine" areas is particularly revolting. Their high wages and the expense of carting themselves and their equipment around is supposed to be justified by their "telling the world the truth" or "making a difference". Of course we aren't actually told the truth - i.e., the capitalism creates the economic rivalries that cause wars and that war is actually good for business, or that famines are caused by the world economic system. We are meant to feel helpless, and to believe that "human nature" is at the root of everything bad, not that the system itself is what creates inequality, war, starvation, powerlessness and misery for the masses and boundless wealth and power for the few.

There is a saying that the first casualty of war is truth, well the first casualty of the class war should be journalists.

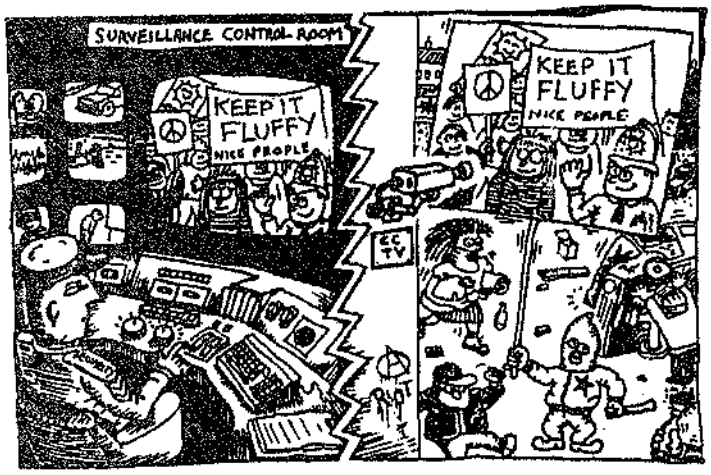
Journalists today in fact fulfil a similar function for Authority as priests used to do in mediaeval Europe. Priests used to (and still do of course) go around dishing out lies, filling peoples heads with useless ideas and debates (i.e., make people more interested in religion and heaven and hell than real daily life), and spying on people. Journalists do the same job - peasants and proletarians used to have to be forced to go to church, now we happily pay for the privilege of letting the Journo-Priest into our living rooms at 6.00pm every evening. The next day we are meant to talk about what was on the news, not our real, miserable, powerless daily existence.

Don't trust journalists - their humanity has been squeezed out of them and their brains are on auto-pilot.

One of the first tasks of a revolution is to abolish the media.

AGAINST CAMERAS ON DEMOS

In recent years there has been a proliferation of people on demonstrations who use cameras. Time was when you could tell who the journo scumbags or police spies were on a demo, these days you can't.



Part of the reason for using cameras is no doubt to record some of the events and people of the day for the posterity of the photo album. This may seem harmless enough but having a stash of photos of faces on demos lying around your house might not seem like such a good idea when the police come battering down your front door. You could argue that the likelihood of the cops raiding your house is slim. Also that surely address books are far more damaging. Yes, they probably are, but at least they serve some useful purpose to us (keeping in contact with other comrades), whereas photos don't, and, more importantly, photos on demos record all sorts of things and faces that we don't know about. I don't want my face to appear in someone's album of demo shots: what sensible or wild speculations could be made by the State by its appearance on *that* demo; with *those* people; at *that* point; and in *this* persons photo collection?? The State doesn't need any more information or *evidence*, of whatever they want to concoct, than they already have.

The other reason for using cameras on demos, the serious and worthy one, is that by filming everything that happens the cops can't get away with lying in court or beating people up for no good reason. It is true that evidence of this nature might benefit the odd victim of State justice however it could just as easily damn others. Not everyone on a demo, in a riot, or a similar action is going to be a passive law-abiding citizen willing to take a police kicking lying down. What if you get arrested, or lose your camera, and the cops get to see your snapshots?

Some journalist types (the ones who pretend to be on our side, as long as we are good democrats) deliberately film bust ups between proles and the State not only for the money they can make when they sell the shots, but also so that lawyers and Jo Public can see what really happened. Unfortunately, this means the State can also see it, and after such bust ups the police are bound to say to themselves that these journalists should hand over their film so that they can identify the trouble-makers. These well-meaning, career-minded journalists could get us into a lot of trouble. They are the sort of people who believe that if only the police and the State were subject to more public scrutiny and accountability then all cops would be nice and the State would be a genuinely lovely thing. What they forget is that the State and its cops exist to maintain the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. The State and its hired thugs didn't arrive by accident, they're here for a specific purpose. If we don't realise who we are exploited by and why then we'll remain like stupid ants forever. These patronising journos and their ideological soulmates (eg. Tony Benn) just add to the general level of mystification and lack of class consciousness in our class. The road to hell is paved with Liberal idiots.

Another good reason you shouldn't take a camera on a demo is that one day journalists are going to be universally known for the anti-working class scum that they are, and when that day arrives their cameras, notepads and dictaphones are going to be shoved into the parts of their bodies where the sun doesn't shine. We don't want any innocent and naive proles to be at the wrong end of this unpleasantness.

If you have any demo photos at home, get rid of them. And don't bring your camera to any more demos.

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Technology and Class

The following two articles were originally discussion texts that formed the basis of a day long discussion meeting held in Salford last July, sponsored by Subversion and the Liverpool Discussion Group.

We would welcome letters with comment, criticism or additions to the themes of this discussion or follow-up articles from our readers.

Capitalism is a system of social relations. In its simple form this is represented by a CONTRACT between the worker who only has his or her ability to work and the OWNER of certain means of production. The worker is then placed into the capitalist plan of production, that is the LABOUR PROCESS.

Capitalism is at one and the same time both a CHAOTIC and a PLANNED system. In the chaos of the market place the capitalist attempts to sell his products [for despite the fact that they are made by workers they remain HIS products]. But in order for him to be successful he has to sell his products at a competitive price, or a price that is dictated by the international market. He therefore seeks to obtain this price by paying the lowest possible one for labour and materials, AND by organising the labour process so as to minimise the socially necessary labour time that goes into making products. The workers for their part seek to get the best possible price for their labour [power] and to minimise the effort expended. Here commenceth the CLASS STRUGGLE.

One of the means which capital has used to extract surplus value is through the development of science and technology. Scientific development has ALWAYS been used as a weapon by capital to attack and break up concentrations of working class power. The problem for capital is that what replaces the old class composition can become an even bigger threat. Henry Ford's introduction of the production line process was designed explicitly to break the power of the skilled craft workers, but in the process there was created a NEW and MORE ANTAGONISTIC composition of the working class. This was the MASS WORKER, the worker of the giant production factories. Some of us taking part in the discussion are the remnants of that composition.

Fraud 2000

Today by contrast, with its new project called 'Ford 2000', that company is attempting, once again to be the 'cutting edge' of capitalist development. In addition, as the 'Fordist' model of production developed it also brought about changes in the 'state form'. What emerged was the 'Planner State', with Keynesian economics at its heart. The economies of capital were to be planned rather than left to the vagaries of the market.

The Keynesian project was an attempt to balance the unbalanceable. That is it attempted to to contain the class struggle within defined limits AND to use it as the MOTOR for capitalist development of the economy. Wage rises and the 'social wage', that is the benefits of the welfare state, were to be paid for by increases in productivity, which in turn would provide the mass of goods and the consumers for this new market.

In the period after World War Two the 'Planner State' became the norm in all the major Western economies, and oversaw what has been called a golden age of accumulation or 'growth'. The 60s and 70s also saw however the emergence and growth of a new militant and political class struggle as the proletariat increasingly refused its part of this bargain.

The struggles of the 60s and 70s, which spread out of the factories and into the communities, undoubtedly threw capital into crisis. The demands of the working class forced capital to look for newer and more radical solutions. These were sought in the fields of technology and economic policy. The production systems of the big factories were to be dismantled and a 'monetarist' approach to economic policy AND the state form became the priorities.

Multinational Capital

This project of MULTINATIONAL capital is dispersing the old concentrations of the working class.

Within the workplace the attack is not just technological but also involves changes in the length of the working week / year and in the status of workers. Increased 'casualisation' of work and the creation of 'core' and 'peripheral' work forces has helped to disperse our class. Some workers have become almost invisible. And the INTERNATIONAL division of the labour process, whilst creating for perhaps the first time a truly world wide working class, is making it correspondingly more difficult for workers to organise resistance. This attack is also not confined to the 'industrial' working class, but affects all sections of workers and all spheres of our lives.

Crisis for the working class

These truly revolutionary changes that have been and are taking place have thrown us into a crisis. They pose problems for the organisational forms and institutions developed by the working class and its revolutionary movement. For some they have proved insurmountable, many people have been physically and psychologically damaged by this current stage of capitalist development. Some have even been destroyed by it.

One final point by way of introduction, capital has made a determined effort to change the gender balance of the international working class. It believes [in so far as it consciously thinks about this at all] that women are more docile and therefore more easily controlled. Here I believe it is making a serious error for when the working class fights back [as it most assuredly will]

the solidarity of women will be a major weapon in our armoury. I also believe that the necessarily increased involvement of women will lead to the development of new forms of organisation. . . . . .

'Modern industry makes Science a productive force distinct form labour and presses it into the service of capital.' Karl Marx.

Technology is an arm and a product of that Science. Technology therefore IS NOT NEUTRAL, it is a weapon of capital pointed at the working class, and it has enabled capital to disperse production around the globe and thereby create a genuinely international division of labour.The struggles of the 60s and 70s pointed to a horizon of separation, that is a separation of the working class from capital. It was those struggles which produced the technology and the political state form we face today.

It is actually workers struggles that provide the dynamic of capitalist development. Capital does not produce new technologies on a whim, but rather it is driven by its internal antagonism, it reacts to the THE OTHER that exists within itself - us, the working class. We are like the alien in the movie, striving to break out and destroy that which contains us. Capital has a constant need to forestall, disrupt and defeat the collective power of the 'enemy within'. And one of the methods it uses is technological innovation. Capital's tendency to increase the proportion of dead or constant capital as against the living or variable capital involved in the production process arises from the fact that living capital, the worker, is AN INSURGENT ELEMENT with whom management is constantly locked in battle.

This struggle has historical antecedents. In the first quarter of this century the dominant forces within the working class were largely the craftsmen, the highly skilled engineering workers who provided the nucleus of Bolshevism and Council Communism. Faced with the threat of these revolutionary movements and fearful of the spread of their ideas, capital undertook a drastic reshaping of production with the aim of deskilling the labour force and separating it from its political vanguards. There were two main components to the project, Taylorist based organisation of the labour process and Fordist restructuring of the working day and wage. In this capital was successful.

Thatcher, Regan ..... and Ned Ludd

At a later stage those who resisted in the 60s and 70s faced a new state form by the beginning of the 80s - the 'crisis state' as Toni Negri calls it. We know it better as Thatcherism or Reganism, two names which I believe actually mystify and personalise CAPITAL's attack upon the working class. Welfare provision were dismantled in favour of discipline by austerity as capital refused any longer to bear the costs of the reproduction of labour power. Monetary policy assumed a central role in driving down real wages, and the ability of the class to fight back was hampered by legal restraints. We didn't roll over and play dead, we resisted, but WE WERE DEFEATED, and not just in Britain but on a world scale.

At the level of production, multi-national capital started to reorganise itself, to disperse and decentralise the locus of its productive activity. When capital began to realise the possibilities that existed within the new technologies it had called into being, it was unsure at first how the working class would react to these self same possibilities. Would a new form of Luddism arise ? Would the working class see the technology as something designed to defeat them ? It must have seemed likely for IBM for one ran a series of advertisements criticising Luddism and Luddite practices - and this 150 years after the real thing.

As well as the harsh economic policies of monetarism, capital used the 'fifth column' of the 'fourth estate' - the press and the media - to break down resistance to technological change. The propaganda machine went into overdrive. We were told that the end of drudgery was upon us. We were going to spend less time in work and have more time for 'leisure' pursuits. And anyway the growth in the leisure industries would pick up any fallout in terms of unemployment from the manufacturing sector. We would learn new skills as old ones disappeared, life would become one continuous educational journey.

Some even posited the 'end of work' - and how we looked forward to that ! But for four million people at least in this country, they were right ! With paradise on the horizon how could there be any need for archaic notions like socialism or communism ? Surely everybody was going to share the fruits of the technological tree. Because for so many of us in the 60s and 70s the struggle had centred on the 'refusal of work', the scam was bought.

As the media distorted the true nature of the changes that were about to take place our class was faced with another problem - the attitude of the trade unions to technology. Those grey minds in grey suits whose job it is to 'sell' us to capital had a grasp on it straightaway however. As the TUC put it in 1979,

'There is the challenge that the rapid introduction of new processes and work organisation will lead to the loss of many more jobs and to growing social dislocation. Equally however, there is the realisation that new technologies also offer great opportunities, not just for increasing the competitiveness of BRITISH industry but for increasing the quality of working life and for providing new benefits to working people.'

Well, 'quality of life' and 'new benefits' don't come easily to mind when trying to sum up the last sixteen years. This ambiguity is a constant factor in trade discussion of the subject, whether at national or local level. It is located in the totally mistaken belief that technology is neutral. In addition the 'Left' for the most part takes this view as well. But as someone said, 'The tool integrated into the system of machinery becomes a machine tool, a machine which incorporates social relations. The social relations of capitalism. Technology is not neutral because it incorporates in its mode of operation the dexterity and skill of the worker who is henceforth

deprived of her skill and subordinated from the point of view of social production to that technology.'

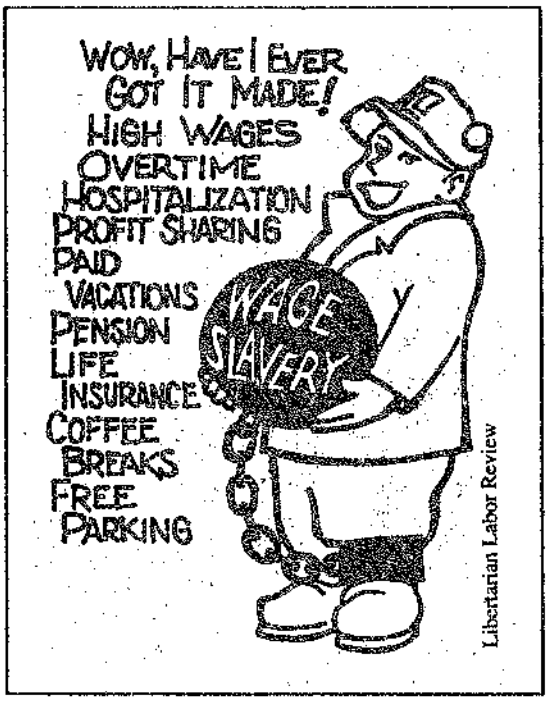
We are today in the period of 'real subsumption', where the urge to generate a surplus results in the wholesale reorganisation of work, with the aim of profiting from economies of scale and cooperation. Science is being systematically applied to industry, and technological innovation become PERPETUAL. The focus is on the relative intensification of productivity rather than the absolute extension of working hours, and consumption is organised by the wholesale cultivation of new 'needs'.The technological weapons we face today, based on the silicon chip, fibre optics and satellite communications, interact with one another to divide us AND the labour process up. Thereby making it easier for capital to control the cycle of accumulation.

The giant factories are coming to the end of their life span as capital 'hives off' more and more work to subcontractors. And they in turn hive some of it off to smaller outfits, including homeworkers, who sometimes utilise the labour of their children. And in saying this I am speaking of this country as well as the so called 'third world'.

Sweatshops are a fact of life throughout the world. It is only by the use of technology that capital can at the same time disperse the division of labour around the globe AND at the same time increase its control over the labour process. The Ford Motor Company is at this moment centralising its control over the whole Ford empire. Alex Trottman, head of international operations and an ex-member of the English working class, has said that they now have the technological means to centralise everything at the company's Dearborn headquarters. They can now build the 'world car' and anticipate savings of between $2 or $3 billion from the Ford 2000 project.

The stark goals of the 'information revolution' are the control and reduction of the costs of labour. The rundown of the Welfare State has to be seen in relation to their ability to move production around the globe. Multinational capital is no longer prepared to pay the costs of reproduction of labour in the old economies of the West. When they can hire twenty Phillipino workers for the price of one European, why should they ?

The fear and uncertainty that have been produced by the changes in world capitalism are being used to



push through strategies and tactics designed to further fragment us. The development of 'core' and 'peripheral' workers is one element; the precarious situation of peripheral workers is the price paid for the relative 'security' of the core workforce. And in the workplace the introduction of quality circles, continuous 'improvement' meetings and team working are designed to get us to police ourselves and talk our mates out of their jobs. Fear permeates into the public sector where the law of value is being applied.

Decline of the unions

In fact capitalism is now everywhere, in every aspect of our lives, it is a totally socialised system. Every aspect of our lives, not just work, is geared to the production and extraction of surplus value.The changes outlined that have and are taking place have had and will continue to have a profound effect on the 'labour movement' and the 'Left'. A 33% reduction in the number of unions in this country between 1981 and 1991 and the slump in membership figures reflects a world wide crisis for the the trade unions. Increasingly capital has no need for the mediating role of the trade unions. With the technology at its disposal it can switch production around the globe if there are strikes or other forms of 'disruption'.

The response in this country has been for the TUC to cuddle up to the CBI. They do this in order to convince management that they still have a useful role to play - in 'adding value'. And only when they can can add value to the product will capital work with them. In other words the only role for the trade unions is to to assist in the continued exploitation of the working class.

We have in addition seen the disintegration of the Stalinist economies of the former 'Eastern bloc' - this means there is now a huge pool of labour available for exploitation by multinational capital. The major barrier to this exploitation apart from political instability is the lack of suitable infrastructure especially in the field of communications. So communications capital, including our 'own' Cable and Wireless, owners of Mercury who have just pulled OUT of providing a public service in this country, are presently working on a system of financial and technological support for the old Eastern bloc and other states with similar 'infrastructure' problems. Billions of potential workers will then be ready to flood the world labour market. Ford's by the way, have opened two component plants in China in the last six months, with two more due to come on stream shortly

.The problems posed by these developments for the Western working class are perhaps, akin to the ones faced by the handloom weavers during the Industrial Revolution. These workers saw their wages drop by some 80 odd per cent in a thirty year period. The weavers and their families starved as they were replaced by machine minders.The experience of being on the periphery is a painful and disorientating one for the Western working class. The steady employment that many have taken for granted is disappearing and high levels of unemployment are a becoming a permanent feature. The developments in technology and the access that multinationals have to a world labour force means that these levels are not going to fall. But the people in the dole queues will be constantly changing as they move in and out of jobs that are increasingly casual.

Multinational capital constantly demand lower costs and their suppliers must meet these demands. Casualisation of the labour force is one answer open to them. This is why work contracts tend now to be for less that two years, so that even

the meagre state 'protections' against redundancy is of no use. And comapnies like Ford are cutting back on the number of suppliers they use - in the case of the Mondeo this has been reduced by 65%. With the lifepspan of new models continually getting shorter, the work 'guaranteed' to the chosen suppliers will be further reduced.

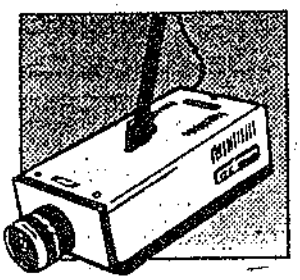
Labouring in Vain

To those who think that the Labour Party will be able to do something about he movement of multinational companies and finance capital I say - GET REAL. The last Labour Government's ability to manoeuvre against the demands of the IMF and World Bank in 1976 was limited, but those difficulties will be as nothing compared to what they will have to face next time round. We have a truly international capital which now has the technology to circumvent any of the restrictions that nation state might want to impose on production or capital flows.

In fact the nation state is fast becoming an anachronism. Multinational capital like the first bourgeoisie, demands a state form that truly represents its interests. Of course the internationalisation of capital also means the internationalisation of the working class.

The nationalistic parties of Social Democracy and the sectionalism of trade unions are blockages and obstacles that the newly reemerging working class must CONFRONT and DESTROY.In the last two hundred years or so, driven by the motor of the class struggle, capital and the working class have continually changed their compositions. Can anything like the same be said for the revolutionary movement ? In the main the answer has to be NO. In fact most of what claims to be revolutionary today is also anachronistic [at best]. It is somewhat ironic that the groups of the 'Left' can only offer our class forms of organisation and institutions that are rooted in the past.

Capital changes, the class changes, but the 'Left' is still living in the first twenty years of this century. The 'Left's forms of organisation - democratic centralism and council communism, were rooted in and products of a particular composition of the working class - that of the skilled craft worker. It should be obvious that that particular composition has long ceased to exist, as SHOULD ITS ORGANISATIONAL FORMS. Both forms were created by white, male, skilled workers and yet they are continually offered as a model for a modern, multi-ethnic and increasingly female dominated, INTERNATIONAL working class. Our class does and will continue to fight back, but it can only do so in ways that reflect its new composition.



THE CITY, SOCIAL CONTROL AND THE LOCAL STATE

"Modern civilisation has crowded the destitute classes together in the cities making their existence thereby more conspicuous and more dangerous. These already form a substantial part of the population, and possess even now, though they are still ignorant of their full power, great political importance... Almost every winter in London there is a panic lest the condition of the poor should become intolerable. The richer classes awake for a moment from their apathy, and salve their consciences by a subscription of money... The annual alarm may some day prove a reality, and the destitute classes may swell to such a proportion as to render continuance of our existent social order impossible" - Sir John Gorst, Tory MP in the 1880s.

Charles Booth in the same period was also to articulate these fears and to promote a combination of charity and social reform aimed at containing the situation.

Periodically the ruling class has become alarmed at the reaction of the working class, and in particular sections of the poorest workers concentrated in the large urban conurbations, to the effects of capitalism.

At its most basic it has been the fear of general social disorder and lawlessness spreading to the wider working class and beyond that, fear that consent for the established order might break down amidst growing organised collective action by sections of the working class with literally "nothing to lose".

Similar fears began to emerge during the late sixties, as rising working class expectations hit the beginnings of the economic crisis to create an explosion of resistance across Europe and the rest of the world, in which rulers and revolutionaries alike saw the seeds of revolutionary change.

Our rulers had problems enough with the expressions of that resistance in workplace struggle but they did have in place flexible and experienced organisations of recuperation in the form of the trade unions. Outside the workplace, things were different. The traditional modes of instilling respect for authority, in particular organised religion and the family, were beginning to break down. 'Community' ties built up over generations on the back of stable single industry employment in heavy engineering, shipbuilding, coal extraction etc were also breaking down as these industries were consciously run down in the 'white hot heat of technological change'.

There was also the beginnings of open racial conflict in some areas as black workers began to flex their muscle and some white workers, uncertain of their future, began to resent this. Many young working class people brought up on full employment and the 'welfare state' and without the memory of the privations of war were less grateful and more challenging than their parents. There was the emergence of the 'generation gap' and the 'youth revolt'. Our rulers began to feel very uneasy about this seeming 'Pandora's box' which they had opened themselves.

But the ruling class in Britain is one of the most experienced in the world. They had come a long way since the 1880s and were certainly not going to sit around until the simmering revolt in the cities could only be contained, if at all, by simple armed suppression.

"Friends . . ."

The apparatus of the state - central and local government and the 'institutions of learning' - were soon put to work, firstly in research and practical experimentation, and then into the task of both shoring up the old institutions of recuperation and creating new ones. They launched an ideological and organisational first strike.

Already in the early sixties, there had been a series of government commissions which had raised alarm bells: Milner-Holland on London's housing, Ingleby on children and young persons, Plowden on primary education and Seebohm on personal social services. All of them were concerned not with poverty and its attendant effects on the working class as a whole but with the way poverty was particularly concentrated in certain working class areas. They recommended the setting up of 'special areas of control', 'priority areas' and so on where the central and local state apparatus would apply 'positive discrimination'.

At this stage the officials were stressing the need for extra financial resources to be applied as a worthwhile investment by the ruling class against worse and more expensive problems in the future. But as the economic crisis grew worse and the relative burden of state expenditure increased, it became more a matter of 'prioritising' scarce and reduced resources. Over the next ten years there were many more commissions and official reports looking into different aspects of the poverty problems of the inner cities. One of the earliest saw the setting up firstly of the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants and then the Community Relations Commission, whose overriding concern was to 'integrate' the 'newcomers' into British society.

What was to emerge from these reports was a series of state-funded programmes and special area initiatives promoted by a range of government departments at the forefront of which was perhaps not surprisingly the Home Office who became very interested in extending their role from 'hard cop' into 'soft cop'. They were to set up one of the more enduring initiatives known as the 'Urban Aid Programme'. The first Urban Programme circular in October 1968 spelt out their objectives:

"The government proposed to initiate an urban programme of expenditure mainly on education, housing, health and welfare in areas of Special Social Need. Those were localised districts which bear the marks of multiple deprivations, which may show itself, for example, by way of notable deficiencies in the physical environment, particularly housing; overcrowding of houses, family sizes above the average; persistent unemployment; a high proportion of children in trouble or in need of care, or a combination of these. A substantial degree of immigrant settlement would also be an important factor, though not the only factor, in determining the existence of special social need."

These were pretty much the determining factors which were to be used for all the various schemes which subsequently emerged, although as concern increased about the financial burdens of caring for the old, large concentrations of elderly persons was also added to the list.

The Reports and programmes also started to conform to a pattern of pseudo-scientific language supplied by the newly fashionable Social Science departments which sought to define the problems in terms of the inadequacies of the people living in the areas rather than the effects of state-sponsored economic restructuring on those areas or the inadequacies of the competitive market economy etc. It is from this era that terms like 'multiple deprivation', 'cycle of deprivation', 'social malaise' etc originate. The definition of the problem as something related only to certain isolated areas implied that the 'system' was basically doing its job fine for the rest of us! The solution then lay not in wholesale social and economic change but in administrative and technical adjustments to the system.

A particular concern at this time was to draw people in the defined areas back into the system of 'democratic representation'. For instance, working class participation in local

government elections was low at the best of times but one of the defining features of the areas which concerned the state was the even tinier proportion of people voting. The state has a continuing need to keep its fingers on the working class pulse but the absence of established channels of communications was preventing this from happening. Many of the schemes funded from the Urban Programme or set up separately were particularly concerned to establish new local forms of representation, which would include residents' associations, community groups, government funded agencies, councillors, council officials, the police, churches and so on, and which would act as a kind of bridgehead into the reformed local and central government structures. 'Neighbourhood Councils', 'Community Forums', 'Area Management Committees', 'Local Steering Groups' were just some of the names used to describe these experiments in 'democracy'.

Many of the early schemes were in the nature of 'action-research', applied to very small areas indeed, and intended on the basis of experimentation with different models of administration and technical applications to provide feedback to governments on the need for broader legislative change and ways of 'cost-effective' management of the 'poverty problem' and of the working class itself. The finance doled out in these cases was piddling, barely enough to cover the wages of a few administrators and researchers and fund a few public relations exercises.

In the housing field, some schemes did bring in real money but always there was always far more schemes bidding than actually got resources allocated. This was the beginning of a more intensive competitive approach to obtaining funds for 'special areas'. Local authorities had long been used to this on a broader scale but now local working class people were to be actively drawn into this process of competing with each other, usually on the demeaning basis of proving how much more rotten 'their' area was than anyone else's!

Obtaining 'community involvement' was not just about shoring up 'consent' to the system and its ways of doing things, it was also aimed at getting the poor to 'do for themselves' at minimal cost to the state. As usual, it was often women who were expected to do most of the 'doing'. Small amounts of money were aimed at various self-help organisations - playgroups, gardening clubs, advice centres, youth clubs, daycare, recycling workshops, crime watch, voluntary language classes and a host of others. The purpose, in summary, was to "take some of the load off the statutory services by generating a fund of voluntary social welfare activity and mutual help amongst the individuals, families and social groups in the neighbourhood, supported by the voluntary agencies" (CDP Objectives and Strategy, 1970).

These small sums of money were seen as 'seed corn' which through a lot of effort by other people would grow into something which could actually be 'eaten'. Another term often used was 'pump-priming', basically facilitating others to get things moving. Much was made also of the 'multiplier effect' - the idea that some initial finance could attract both money and effort from other organisations or the 'community' itself to make something much more effective than the initial sum would itself have provided for. Of course, any group which got a grant or a loan had to provide progress reports and accounts etc which kept the paymasters in touch with what was happening on the ground.

The various special area schemes came and went providing the state with much useful information along the way. Some new ones were set up with different names and in different areas and the whole process repeated. As for the multiplier effect, many groups suffered severely when the special area schemes disappeared and they had to rely on mainstream government or local authority funding which was being cut back. Many had to close down altogether.

In terms of any real impact on the social and economic conditions of people living in the special areas, the results were pretty negligible - where anything was achieved in a particular area, this was more than matched by serious decline elsewhere. In Liverpool, for instance, which in the late sixties and early seventies had more poverty initiatives than any other city, almost every indicator had got worse and seriously worse in the inner city areas.

Clearly none of the schemes was aimed even collectively at altering the general poverty suffered by our class. At best the more naive social reformers thought they might spread the poverty more evenly - but even here they failed miserably.

The EEC had joined the bandwagon in 1974 with its Social Action Programme, demonstrating that the same problems and concerns of the British state (under Labour and Tory) were shared by states in the rest of Europe. The thinking of the Eurocrats was along familiar lines - the objectives of one of their projects - a network of family advice centres - was to "help the poorest families come to terms with the particular ill effects of extreme poverty". They followed the same path as the nationally inspired schemes, gathering intelligence for the state, deflecting independent class-based opposition but providing little in the way of new resources.

Although most of the 'action-research' type projects came to an end in this period, others like the Urban Programme and Housing Action Areas achieved a degree of permanence and continued to selectively fund various local schemes around the country.

Things had tended to settle down into more of an administrative routine until, in 1981, various inner city areas - Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, Brixton, Birmingham and Bristol - exploded into riots. The initial spark for many of the riots was confrontation between the police and black youth. This in itself said much about the failure of various programmes to integrate particularly second generation black youth into the system. More worrying for the state was the fact that many other, young and not so young, working class people, black and white, working and unemployed, either actively joined in or gave support.

Suddenly the spotlight was again on the 'poverty stricken' inner cities and the 'failure' of twelve years of the 'poverty programme' was highlighted for all to see. After an initial period of government tough talk and then reflection, decisions were taken to both tool up the hard cops and reinvigorate the soft cop approach. Some extra resources were made available but generally existing programmes were re-prioritised towards the riot-torn areas.

Given the experience of the previous 'poverty programme', you might have expected some fresh thinking, but for the most part it wasn't forthcoming. The same concepts, approaches and strategies using the same language were simply beefed up a bit and relaunched.

If there was a change it was only that

now competition for the scarce resources was even more extreme. The government's 'Estate Action Programme' for run-down council estates was expanded. There was a reemphasis on local corporate management and the need to promote 'employment and training' as part of the process of physical regeneration.

As time went by, there was a shift to fewer but larger, more radical

schemes with the birth of Housing Action Trusts, City Challenge and Urban and Industrial Development Corporations. Although, in line with Tory thinking, private business has become much more involved with these schemes, the approach on the ground in terms of 'community involvement', 'self-help', 'building a consensus' etc was much the same as far as the inner city housing areas were concerned.

The objective of transferring responsibility to local people for administering themselves at reduced cost to the state and effectively making working class people themselves prioritise the resources doled out, received new impetus. On the one hand, through a process of atomising estates through pressure on people to buy their council houses, and on the other by dividing council estates through schemes for tenant management or even tenant co-ops. Needless to say, local Labour-controlled authorities, after expressing some initial concerns, have enthusiastically taken up all these ideas.

Having sold the need for 'local corporate management' approaches and 'multi-disciplinary' working in the special areas, the government, under increased pressure to cut public spending, cleverly repackaged most of its various schemes into one pot called the 'Single Regeneration Budget' and in the process cut the overall spending. In future, special areas might be larger but there were a lot less of them, with EEC money also being 'prioritised' into the same areas.

The picture painted here is of a fairly consistent state policy being carried out throughout the period 1968 to the present day, with more or less enthusiasm, depending on the level of working class revolt in the cities. To the extent that some local working class areas have benefited from extra resources, this has generally only acted as a break on the deteriorating social and economic climate and has been at the expense of workers elsewhere.

From the state's point of view, the problems associated with the breakdown of 'community' and family support structures relate to the conservative role these have played in reproducing authoritarian pro-establishment values and maintaining at little cost to the state a sufficiently tolerable condition for the 'poor', to avoid open revolt. For workers there are also problems associated with these changes, including the effects of 'anti-social' crime, which predispose them to the enticements of the state, in the absence of anything better.

But it would be wrong to see the workers in these areas as simply being acted upon by the authorities. First of all, their selection has usually been a response to local revolt, local organisation and activity. Workers don't just give up in situations, even of extreme poverty; many fight back and try to do so collectively. If the form of that collective action is limited and stunted by capitalist ideology that is perhaps to be expected. Workers recognise and fight for (or at least campaign for!) more resources. Even where organisation is localised, the workers in many cases do not see their struggle as being at the expense of workers elsewhere. But the state does not hand back resources without having control over them, or at least ensuring the structures set up, and the 'thinking' of those entrusted with the resources are such that it can rest easy they will be used in the 'correct' way.

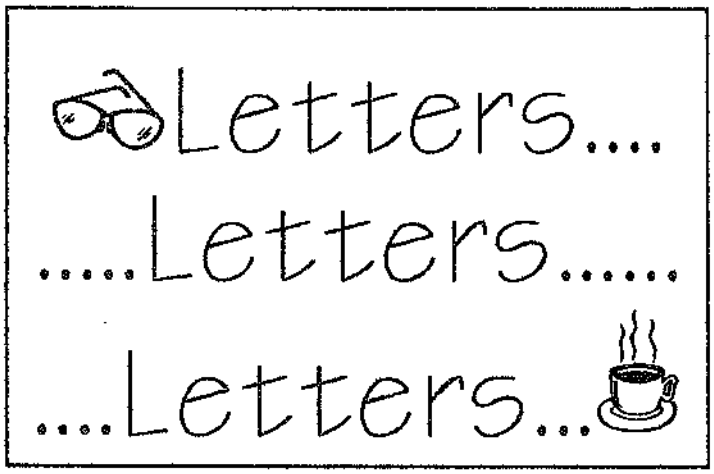
In the process, the very moment of victory, when hard fought-for money or other resources are won by local working class people, is often also the point at which the organisation set up to use the resources becomes an agent of the state rather than an expression, however deformed, of working class aspirations. If the state manages to suck in local working class leaders from amongst the activists, it has succeeded in containing opposition, but since it can't actually solve our problems, revolt will inevitably reemerge. The state hopes when it does, that it has the right people and structures in the 'community' to deflect it - but there are no guarantees.

There are risks in the state's approach, that local working class people won't be sucked in and that promises made, skills developed, and organisations set up supposedly within secure state tutelage, will turn "against the hand that feeds them". It has happened in a number of cases. Even the state-paid workers employed to encourage this whole approach can turn out to be unreliable. A whole network of 'Community Development Workers' employed by Manchester City Council, for instance, had to be closed down when they turned into local agitators. Even more impressive were the national network of Community Development Project workers funded through the Home Office and local authorities who got together to expose the whole racket in a series of excellently informative pamphlets, one of which ("Gilding the Ghetto"), supplied much of the inspiration and information for this discussion paper! They were eventually closed down.

Unfortunately, there are many self-proclaimed radicals whose ideas around concepts of 'self-management', 'anarcho-syndicalism', 'local autonomy' etc are easily co-opted by the more experienced ideologists of the state. Credit unions, LETS schemes and so on, popular amongst many anarchists and greens, are already being eyed up by local representatives of the state - political and professional - as a useful adjunct to their machinery of incorporation! We need to be much more aware of the subtleties of the state's local management policies, if we are to try and help revolt turn into revolution rather than a means of reforming the existing system to help it survive a bit longer.

Footnote

For mechanisms of incorporation in other spheres of the state's activity over the same period, see also the article "Working Against the Left in Manchester" (available from Subversion) and "Bollocks to Clause Four" in Subversion 16



The following letter has been shortened for reasons of space.

Dear Subversion,

The writer of the article 'Bambi Lib' in Subversion 16 says that vegetarians should "stop bothering ordinary working class people who eat meat in the here and now".

It's true that many vegetarians adopt a moralistic preaching tone in their propaganda but a far more important issue here is the mass of scientific evidence from all over the world of the disastrous medical effects of the average 'western' diet containing vast quantities of saturated fat-laden so-called meat.

... Bear in mind that the ruling class generally regards working class (or even middle-class) human beings as farm animals to be exploited when possible and disposed of when not and it's not surprising that they and their media should remain silent about the harmful side-effects of flesh gobbling even though the evidence has been available in some cases for decades.

... It is surprising that professed revolutionaries like the 'Bambi Lib' writer should think that this issue has nothing to do with class interest, class solidarity and class struggle.

... As for socialism, which I take to be a more or less egalitarian society, the main obstacle to its achievement is the perceived interests of of the majority of the developed world's population (who are definitely middle-class by world standards) in the continuation of capitalism which among other things gives them meat every day if they want it. So any efforts to convince them that at least one of the 'benefits' of capitalism is very much the reverse just might hasten the revolution a little.

Yours etc.

J. W.

Subversion Reply:

Dear Comrade,

Sorry about the delay in replying to your letter.

We quite take your point about the unhealthy nature of the food capitalism offers up to us - like everything else in capitalism, it's not there to do US any favours. The point about the article in Subversion that you refer to is that it was dealing with the Animal Rightist argument that berates the workers for not rising above the conditions that life under capitalism imposes on us, and striving individually for "purity". In other words we were attacking the anti-worker arguments of many animal rightists, rather than the anti-capitalist argument that you were putting forward in your letter.

While there are of course steps that can be taken in daily life to try to ameliorate some of the effects of life under capitalism, like trying to eat a bit more healthily, we have always taken the view that substantial change is only likely to result from a fundamental challenge to capitalism itself, and that comes from the radicalisation that will accompany a large scale upsurge in class struggle. We believe that our efforts are most fruitfully used when directed towards that goal - the goal of communist revolution.

As for your final point, we strongly disagree that most people in the developed world are middle class by world standards. Class is not a matter of level of income/living standard but of the relationship of people to the production process. If one group of workers (for instance in the developed world) are given a bigger portion of crumbs from the capitalists' table, they are still working class and still exploited, and the capitalists will always have a need to squeeze more profits out of them, to attack them in various ways. This means that the objective basis for class unity on a world scale permanently exists.

As to educating the "better-off" workers as to the unsavouriness of capitalism's commodities (whether meat or whatever) we are not at all against this but we think the "education" of class struggle is a million times more potent and so, as we said above, we concentrate our modest efforts in that direction.

We hope this clarifies our views somewhat, but don't hesitate to write again if you want to.

Yours etc.

SUBVERSION

A FURTHER CONTRIBUTION TO "THE ANIMAL DEBATE":

THE COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY NATURE OF NICENESS

This is a response to the two articles that appeared in the last SUBVERSION (16). It is written by another SUBVERSION member.

Firstly, I agree with both the previous articles, what I want to examine further is the notion that large sections of the working class must become more compassionate, caring, selfless and generally nice before there is a hope of us being able to embark on a successful global insurrection against class society.

A lot of "revolutionaries" in the working class argue that unless we challenge (and win against) "unacceptable" behaviour in our class now we won't have the "revolution" we want and nothing will be solved. The cry is: "The 'revolution' won't solve everything at once, as if by magic".

The "revolutionaries" who say this sort of thing reveal the poverty of their notion of what the overthrow of class

society means also they expose their lack of understanding of the class struggle and their fear of a working class that gets out of control.

For us at Subversion the revolution, the class war, won't be over until the last vestiges of trade, exchange, slavery and all exploitation of humankind is extinguished. When we all live for ourselves, and not for work, or for others, in one amazing, diverse and brilliant global human community then we will have achieved freedom.

So, those who think that the "revolution" won't create a world human community must think of revolution in terms of a coup d'etat, a simple change of the people who run the State. Maybe they think that there was a real revolution in Nicaragua, Zimbabwe, China, or that the Russian Revolution basically succeeded but went a bit wrong later. If these people are aiming for this sort of revolution (with maybe a few added nicenesses, like "equality" for women) then they should, of course, sign their brain away to the leaders and hopeful future tyrants of groups like the Socialist Workers Party.

Understandable sentiments from the teeth behind this er.... non-violent direct action protester.

Secondly, it is a misunderstanding of what class struggle really is that leads people to dismiss it as "not enough". Class struggle is the continual fight between the owners of this planet (the bourgeoisie) and the dispossessed, the workers. They try to control and exploit us as best they can and we try to avoid control and exploitation as much as we can. Obviously, for most of the time we haven't done very well, however our bosses are shit-scared of us, and even if many of us don't know it now, when capitalists and the friends of capitalism look at the working class they know they are beholding their future executioners. Now, the working class engages in class struggle because it sees a way of making its life more tolerable (this may be by defending existing, or getting more, material comforts and/or it may be as a way of getting their own back against all our bosses and wise sages) - this struggle holds the germ of revolutionary action because the only way we can hope to even maintain tolerable living conditions is by removing the bosses and the system (the economy) that exploits us. More than this, as our consciousness of class and capitalism is raised through the war we wage on our bosses and their friends it becomes easy to see that if we eradicated class society entirely, if we abolished money and exchange and our lives were driven by our desires and needs instead of by profit and control, then our lives would be far better than merely tolerable. In fact, in a revolutionary situation it becomes obvious that the only way we can actually survive is by going the whole way to communism, otherwise we'll be exterminated.

This class struggle goes on whether revolutionaries are around or not, workers do not need to be condescendingly led into struggle by messianic politicos. In fact, they are not led into struggle by these types, invariably it is the swell-heads of so-called "revolutionary politics" who tag on the end of events desperately trying to catch up in order to take charge. The task of revolutionaries is to examine struggle and changing conditions and to participate in class struggle in order to warn of false friends and blind alleys and to push the struggle ever further by inspiration and deed. We must also, of course, try to attract as many disgruntled proletarians to revolutionary views as possible, so that when things start happening there are enough of us around to help prevent our class slipping back into defeat or into the jaws of manipulators and other scumbags. This does not mean attempting to create a mass movement - this is impossible because a mass movement can only come into being in a revolutionary event - it simply means getting enough individuals and groups of revolutionaries around the world so that we can make a difference. Revolutionaries did not invent class struggle and will not make the revolution, but their role in explaining what is happening or what will happen is important during the course of daily class struggle and vital during a revolutionary event.

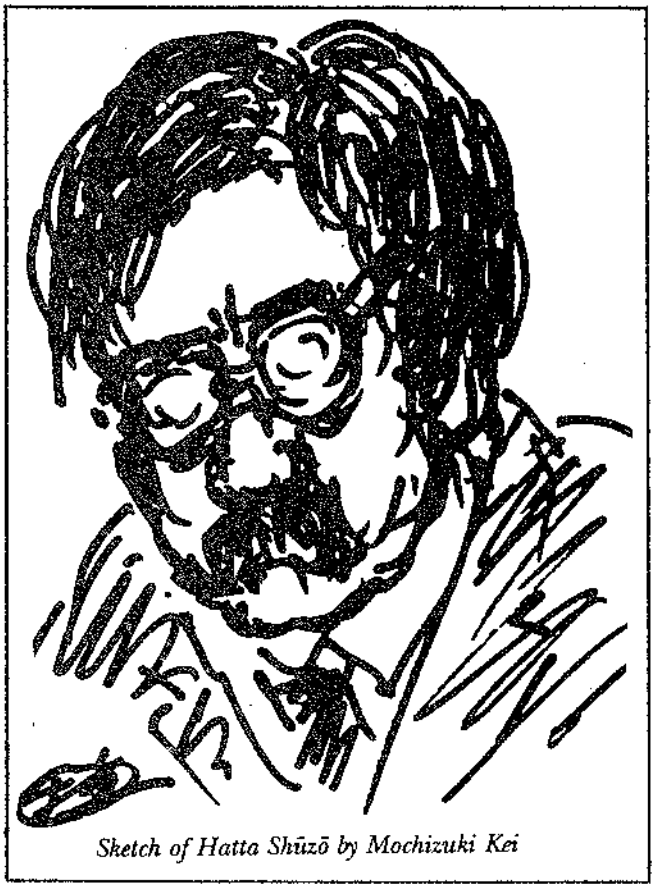
The decryers and doubters of the actuality and potential of class struggle have failed to understand what the real motivations of the working class are (i.e. class struggle) and instead of acting on this knowledge they hope to change workers under capitalism through an ideology of niceness. They want workers to become, for example, non-sexist, non-racist, non-meat-eating, and generally polite. They fear that if a revolution came and large swathes of the population weren't polite and lovely then the masses would form into hysterical bands of blood thirsty louts who ate babies and raped sheep. This sort of thinking is indicative of tyrants on both the left and right wings of capitalism. It is based on morbid fantasies about "human nature". The only way a revolution will occur is through an escalation of class struggle, when workers in struggle find their common interests and identify their enemies and make the leap from defending their living conditions to attacking without mercy the source of their misery. It is only through struggle that workers will unite as equals - because it makes their fight more effective, not because they have suddenly become "politically correct". ***Continued on page 17***

ANARCHIST-COMMUNISM IN JAPAN

BOOK REVIEW

John Crump. Hatta Shuzo and Pure Anarchism in Interwar Japan. Macmillan Press, 1993.

In this year when we have been bombarded with so much nauseating propaganda over "VJ Day", how inspiring it is to read of men and women who were as far removed as anyone could be from the racist stereotype of all Japanese as emperor-worshipping nationalist fanatics, and who stood instead for a world of no classes, no markets, no states, no frontiers, no wars.



Sketch of Hatta Shūzō by Mochizuki Kei

Hatta Shuzo and Pure Anarchism in Interwar Japan is a fascinating account of the struggles and arguments of revolutionaries in Japan over half a century ago. But it is of more than just historical interest. Many of the issues debated there and then are still very much alive here and now, not only among groups like Subversion, but also within parts of the 'Green' movement.

The book opens with a description of the rise and fall of anarchist communism in Europe: how it emerged in the 1870s, defining itself in opposition to the collectivist and syndicalist strands in anarchism, and how it went into decline after the First World War, losing much of the theoretical clarity it had achieved earlier.

Anarchist ideas were introduced into Japan by the prominent socialist Kotoku Shusui in 1906 on his return from a stay in the USA. The existing labour movement split into social-democratic and 'direct actionist' wings. Within the anarchist camp however the division between syndicalist and communist anarchists was not pronounced. All anarchists directed their activity towards the labour unions which emerged after about 1915.

One constant feature was the unrelenting repression exercised by the state. Public meetings were broken up, publications seized, organisations banned, known militants hounded, sacked from their jobs, imprisoned. In 1911 Kotoku was hanged with 11 others following their conviction on trumped-up charges in the 'High Treason' trial. Osugi Sakae emerged as the most able anarchist amongst the younger generation. He too was murdered by the state in the chaotic aftermath of the 1923 Tokyo earthquake.

Enter the ex-clergyman Hatta Shuzo, reputedly an alcoholic and wife-beater, also a captivating public speaker, and the one person who for a few years in the late 1920s and early 1930s best expressed in his writings the revitalisation of anarchist communist theory which emerged from the activities and debates of the Japanese anarchist movement in the interwar period.

Here is one writer's assessment of Hatta's significance, quoted in the book:

"Basing himself on Kropotkinism, he developed the theory of anarchist communism one step further. After Kropotkin's death, world anarchism rapidly regressed from the level to which Kropotkin had brought it...there was nobody other than Hatta (not only in Japan but in the entire world) who took a step forward in this way".

[Petr Kropotkin (1842-1921) was an anarchist communist whose writings strongly influenced the early Japanese anarchist movement].

An anarchist federation (Kokuren) was formed in 1925 and a libertarian union federation (Zenkoku Jiren) the following year. By 1927-28 both organisations had become strongholds of the 'pure' anarchists - that is, those who sought to purge anarchism of all non-anarchist elements, particularly syndicalism, whose adherents were forced to form separate organisations of their own.

The pure anarchists' opposition to syndicalism focussed on the likelihood that the organisational structure of industrial unions would keep the division of labour, perfected under capitalism, intact in the new society, thus sowing the seeds of new forms of social conflict, and leading inevitably to the necessity for some sort of "superior coordinating machinery" - in other words, a new state.

Hatta's position on this and other issues is described at length in the two central chapters of the book, titled "Critique of the Old World" and "Hope for a New World". Here we can do no more than indicate the main areas over which the debates ranged: the relationship between class struggle and revolutionary action

the analysis of science as an example of the form knowledge takes in class-divided societies - monopolised by specialists and used by the ruling class to exert social control

the notion of historical progress: has capitalism been a necessary stage in human history, bringing into existence the essential preconditions for communism, or (Hatta's view), has communism been an option which has been "permanently open throughout history", depending for its achievement "not on material circumstances but on human determination"

the conception of anarchist communism in terms of "social physiology" - meaning "the discovery of the means for satisfying human needs with the minimal expenditure of human energy so as to realise universal happiness"

the relationship, before and after the revolution, between the countryside and the cities

ow to accomplish in practice the theoretically desirable elimination of the division of labour

the role of revolutionaries and revolutionary organisation

We do not see all of the views expressed by Hatta as representing a step forward for revolutionary theory, even in those days. During this period the working class formed only a small fraction of Japan's population and were not regarded by Hatta as the sole potentially revolutionary force in society. Instead he looked to the "propertyless masses", a category which did include wage labourers but was dominated by the tenant farmers.

Since the "propertyless masses" were not a class, they could not engage in class struggle, (which Hatta dismissed anyway as a dispute over the share of the spoils within capitalism, or a fight to replace one ruling class by another), but could simply join in a sudden, once-and-for-all explosion of revolutionary action. However understandable such an analysis was as a reflection of a specific stage of development of capitalism in Japan, it is not one we could share. In fact we would go further and say that it was somewhat paradoxical that the pure anarchists, who were so firmly implanted in the urban centres and in the struggles of the industrial working class, and whose advanced views were no doubt a product of those material circumstances, should nonetheless have pinned their hopes so firmly on the rural peasants and tenant farmers.

As the 1930s progressed, the Japanese state's imperialist conquests abroad were accompanied by increasingly severe repression of opposition on the home front.

Among the pure anarchists various strategies for survival were attempted, none of them in the end successful. Some advocated a reunification of Zenkoku Jiren with the syndicalist union federation, Jikyo. This took place in 1934 and, interestingly, was in part the outcome of a recognition of the need for greater involvement in day-to-day struggles. Others favoured the abandonment of the cities and the dissolution of the anarchist federations. At the opposite extreme to this a third tendency favoured a highly secretive and tightly structured organisation.

This last view found expression in the formation of the Anarchist Communist Party of Japan, and had disastrous consequences. In 1935 a police investigation into a bungled bank robbery carried out by members of 'the Party' led eventually to the arrest of hundreds upon hundreds of members of the entire anarchist movement. Subsequently, "For most anarchists in Japan, there was from 1936 no alternative but to retreat into private life, think one's own thoughts, and try to stay alive, while waiting for the day when the state would, in its turn, be brought to its knees".

We leave the last word to the author: "Even if one judges some of the strategies the pure anarchists employed to have been seriously flawed, they surely deserve respect for the fact that the state had to crush them, since it could not win them over".

Footnote: at £45+ this book is beyond most people's means, but it is worth trying to get hold of it through your local library. Much of the information in the book, and lots else besides, is summarised in a 36-page pamphlet on The Anarchist Movement in Japan, which is available for £1.50 from John Crump, Department of Politics, University of York, York YO1 5DD.

Against Niceness

Continued from page 15

Anyone who thinks that it is possible for the working class to unite as equals in a sea of niceness before we have started to smash capitalism is just pissing in the wind. And worse, these ideologues of niceness will act as a brake on revolutionary impetus because essentially they despise and fear the working class and think we need to be kept under control. At best they don't understand what class struggle is and at worst they are tyrannical scum who will prove that they are the friends of capitalism rather than of humanity.

We can't make life appreciably better for the worlds proletariat under capitalism, we can only improve our lot by embarking on the struggle against the bosses and their world economy and eventually destroying class society completely. If we don't attack the source of our misery not only will we fail to change anything but they will kill us anyway.

For this reason the debate about animals is irrelevant unless we can show that being nice to animals under capitalism is utterly unimportant to the nature of class struggle and the task of freeing this planet from the stranglehold of our bosses and their friends. Already, parts of the bourgeoisie are defending animals and the environment because they can see a profit in it. With all this niceness around, people defending animals, local government recycling old rubbish, equal opportunities as law, roads protesters, ecological campaigners in every walk of life, health food shops everywhere, and people like David Bellamy and Alan Clark around I reckon I should be well on the way to achieving a state of complete nirvana! But sadly I'm not. None of this has done anything to change my miserable life as a wage slave or given me any more control over my existence, and it hasn't done anything for the rest of my class either.

Some people look to the animal rights protesters and admire their courage and the fact that they are fighting one aspect of business and the even the cops - but frankly, so what? working class fascists fight the cops too, should we admire them as well? If we are going to be uncritical of any one or group that fights an aspect of authority then we may as well stay in bed with our wet dreams and posters of Nelson Mandela. How soon will it be before English lefties and anarchists start supporting the Orange Men of Northern Ireland, with their heroic slogan: "No Surrender!"???

But to return to the original argument: if you think it is more feasible to make everyone nice to each other, and everything, than it is to destroy capitalism and class society then you may as well join the Christian Church - and see how far that gets you!!

AGAINST THE TYRANNY OF NICENESS!
FOR PROLETARIAN UNCONTROLLABILITY!

OJ is a RICH BASTARD.

We say: There's no such thing as an

INNOCENT RICH BASTARD!

WHAT WE STAND FOR

We meet regularly for political discussion and to organise our activities. The following is a brief description of our basic political principles:

- We are against all forms of capitalism; private, state and self-managed.

- We are for communism, which is a classless society in which all goods are distributed according to needs and desires.

- We are actively opposed to all ideologies which divide the working class, such as religion, sexism and racism.

- We are against all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" movements such as the IRA.

- The working class (wage labourers, the unemployed, housewives, etc.) is the revolutionary class; only its struggle can liberate humanity from scarcity, war and economic crisis.

- Trade unions are part of the capitalist system, selling our labour power to the bosses and sabotaging our struggles. We support independent working class struggle, in all areas of life under capitalism, outside the control of the trade unions and all political parties.

- We totally oppose all capitalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. We are against participation in fronts with these organisations.

- We are against participation in parliamentary elections; we are for the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class and the establishment of organisations of working class power.

- We are against sectarianism, and support principled co-operation among revolutionaries.

- We exist to actively participate in escalating the class war towards communism

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Subversion,

Dept 10, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M11HW

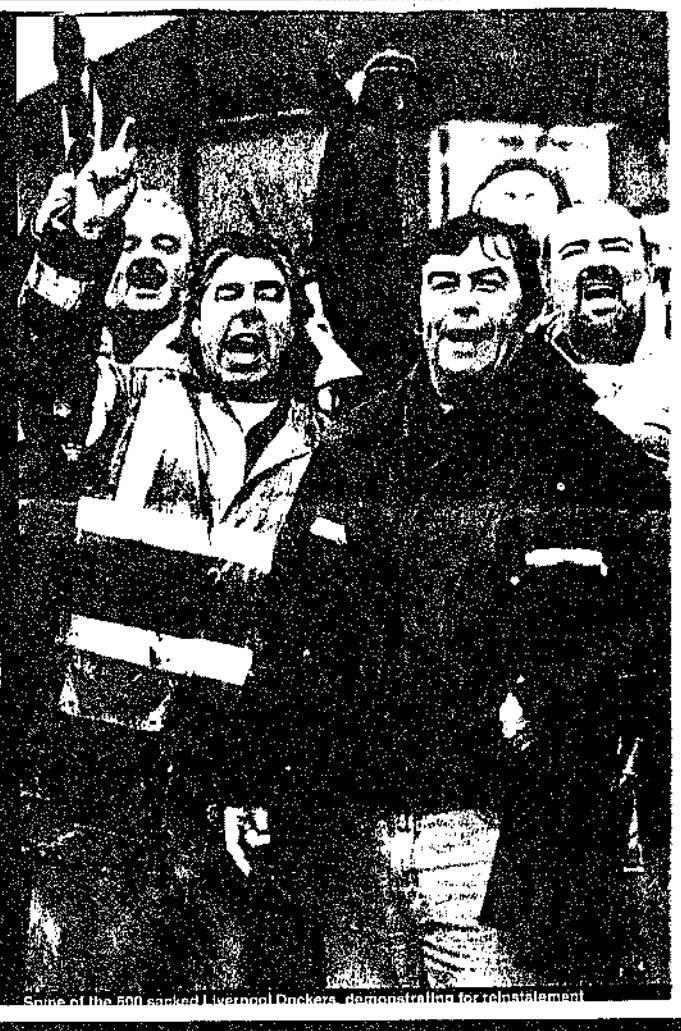
Subversion

Issue 18

FREE!

WORKERS OF THE WORLD SUPPORT LIVERPOOL DOCKERS

THE WORLD IS OUR PICKET LINE



Some of the 500 sacked Liverpool Dockers demonstrating for reinstatement

THE Mersey Docks & Harbour Company could lose its biggest customer, if it does not reinstate 500 dockers sacked for resisting the introduction of casual labour

In this issue:

Spain '36: the end of Anarchism?

The Liverpool Dockers

And much more!

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In This Issue

In the past few months we have seen a resurgence of the class struggle in workplaces. Starting with the strikes in France last year, we have seen it spread to the Merseyside Dockers, Posties and the Employment Service to name but a few over here.

The articles in this issue of Subversion reflect this development. We have articles on all three of these.

The article on the Merseyside Dockers was written by a communist who lives in Liverpool and who has been active around the dispute. As he is not a member of Subversion we have to issue the standard disclaimer, whilst at the same time recommending it for its incisive brilliance!

The Employment Service strike, which has recently come to an end, provoked some discussion within our group. It is followed by some personal views of one of our members who is a claimant.

1996 is the 60th Anniversary of the Spanish Civil War. We could not resist the temptation of jumping onto the bandwagon. So we have reprinted an article from Wildcat, first published 10 years ago to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Civil War!

Two of the articles are written by people who are not members of Subversion. We would like to see more articles written by non-members in our pages. It gives others a voice, provokes discussion amongst revolutionaries and makes our magazine more interesting. If you would like to contribute an article, then drop us a line and let us know.

HELP!!

Subversion is broke. Each issue costs us around £200 to print and another £70 - £80 to mail out. This issue will use up all our remaining cash! We regularly get donations from readers. Now we are asking YOU to help. If you've received this through the mail, it cost us 50p, if you got it through shop or from one of us, it cost 25p. We intend to go on producing it for free distribution, but we are asking for those who can afford it to make a donation.

Make cheques etc payable to **Subversion.**

Subversion,
Dept 10, 1 Newton Street,
Manchester M1 1HW

Voices From The M27 Corridor

Subversion Note: This article is reprinted from an anonymous publication we received.

The following piece is a brief exploration of strategies of control and resistance around motorways. It will avoid the issues of pollution and environmental destruction usually associated with the roads battle and look at no less real struggles with more fundamental implications for the direction of class conflict.

ROAD WARS

A key component in the reorganisation of space for the needs of profit and power has been the motorway, facilitating both economic development and administrative/military efficiency.

The military uses of motorways didn't end with Hitler's autobahns. Today, in the event of a 'civil emergency' or war, motorways would be reclassified as 'Essential Service Routes' (ESRs) reserved for military use only. The M25 would become a ring of steel around London [no change there then -ed.] with checkpoints at each junction to prevent the movement of civilians into and out of the city. Other cities would face similar restrictions. The desperation to complete the M3 between Winchester and Southampton and get on with the Newbury by-pass is partly due to their need to link the military port at Marchwood with army bases to the north. Indeed, one of the arguments raised by the security services against tunnelling under Twyford Down was the risk of sabotage.

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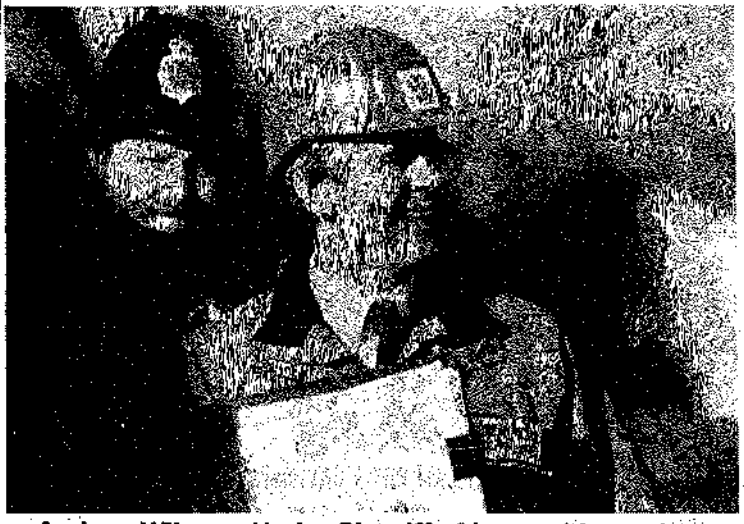
Motorways are fundamental to the circulation of commodities - the lifeblood of capitalism - whether it's goods and services, workers or consumers. Along their routes superstores appear, alongside 'business parks', industrial estates and suburbs; providing new configurations of conformity and different possibilities for resistance.



Andrew Wilson - Under-Sherriff of Lancashire at the M66 Eviction. A total shithead! Our time will come!

While motorised transport and the infrastructure built for it is an example of capitalist technology, its subversion and use for purposes other than what was intended is always possible. As early as 1911 the Bonnot gang, a group of Anarchist bank robbers, were the first to use stolen cars for quick getaways. Meanwhile, motorways provide a rapid means for certain city folk to get out to the country whether it's for raves, festivals or turning over the odd stately home or golf clubhouse. Nor should we forget the mobile looters of the LA riots, loading the contents of blazing superstores and warehouses into the backs of their cars before heading back onto the freeway.

Motorways have also been used in the extension of industrial warfare. Recognising their economic importance, striking miners in 1984 took to driving in convoy across all three lanes of the M1 at a snail's pace to hold up the traffic. In Cleveland, USA, a partial reorganisation of space for proletarian needs was achieved during the Truckers' Strike of 1970. For thirty days truckers disrupted capitalist circulation with a mobile blockade of the roads in and around the city. The drivers took a part in the regulation of the city's affairs by sustaining the circulation of food and medicine. A lorry driver involved in a blockade of Southampton docks in 1991 was asked how it could be organised: 'It's easy, we just use the old CB grapevine'.

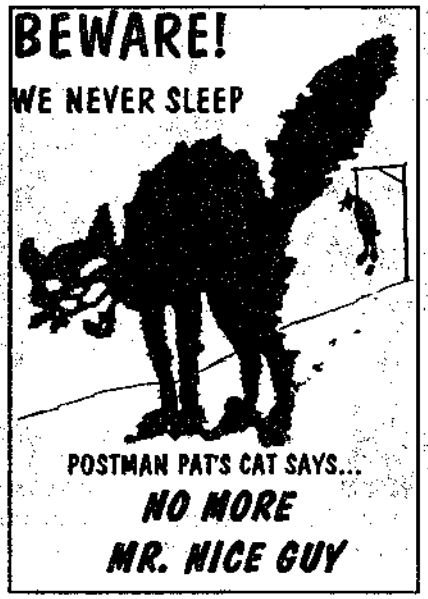
It is against this backdrop - the need to restrict working class mobility to acceptable limits like going to work - that we should look at such measures as police roadblocks, tolls on motorways, satellite and video surveillance of traffic and the campaigns against tax and insurance evasion. Class conflict occurs in all sorts of situations - this is one of them.

So, even within the dominant architecture and geography of capitalism the possibility for subversion is always resent, even in the 'model communities' clustered along motorway corridors. Motorways - those arteries of profit and power - can also carry the virus of class warfare.

Let's spread it.

WILDCATS IN THE POST

In their drive for Quality and Customer Care Royal mail are trying to eradicate second deliveries. On the one hand Royal Mail trumpet the British postal service as the best in the world and on the other they say that in order to remain competitive the American model of a postal service must be introduced here. The post in the USA, of course, is one of the *worst* services in the world. Could it be that Royal Mail is not interested in providing a good service and would prefer to increase its profits at the expense of its customers and its workers? Surely not! Still, if Royal Mail doesn't make itself attractive to investers then privatisation (which is still high on the governments agenda) won't be the moneyspinner it is supposed to be. Indeed, the government has recently increased again the amount of money it takes from Royal Mail profits, this could be seen as a punishment for Royal Mail bosses for not winning the recent privatisation argument but it is also another lever to use against workers to justify extracting more work from them and in kicking them out.



Over the last couple of years Royal Mail has been trying to cut delivery staff, in the lead up to scrapping the second delivery.

As *wage slaves* (we don't work for them out of the goodness of our hearts, we do it to survive!) we are not interested in making any business successful, or efficient, or flexible. We want to be able to earn as much money as possible for doing as little work as we can get away with. Our bosses, of course, want us to work as hard as possible for as little as possible. The only reason we may object to privatisation is because it is likely to be a means to make us work harder for less, that's if we don't get sacked, and also because it will be a means to weaken our resistance to the plans, whims, threats and daily brutalities of our bosses. We couldn't give a toss about the job, if it was possible to pick up our wages each week by working some sort of clock-card scam whereby we didn't even have to turn up to work each day - well, only a fool wouldn't do it.

Over the last couple of years Royal Mail has been trying to cut delivery staff, in the lead up to scrapping the second delivery, in a piecemeal way at various small offices around Britain. Sometimes the delivery office manager has proposed the idea (which is to make certain positions part-time and then get the full-timers to cover the part-time delivery's second delivery) only to realise just in time that it would be impossible to introduce due to the staff taking industrial action. Sometimes though they go ahead with it anyway. This is what happened at the Portobello office in Edinburgh last November. It lead to a wildcat (unnofficial, that is, unballotted) strike across Scotland that, by some estimates, brought out 12,000 posties. The workers won this week long action, Royal Mail negotiators admitted that they had a had "a great punch on the nose", and the plan to downgrade four jobs (out of the 24 in the office) to part-time positions was withdrawn.

Posties may have won this battle in Scotland, but the war is by no means over. Only a few weeks ago there was an unnofficial strike in London over the same issue, and there is a general feeling that a national, official strike over the issue will occur this Spring. The posties union (Communications Workers Union) may want to orchestrate a

(Continued on page 5)

Royal Mail Bosses - Sperm of the Devil

Recently there was the threat of an official strike in Royal Mail in Reading over changes in work practices. The strike was eventually called off before it happened because management backed down. However, before the little creeps lost their bottle they managed to give a jackanory to the local press. In a front page article they said that the *average take home* pay of a postie was £335 a week! Unfortunately only some simple maths tells you that (with an hourly rate only just over the proposed national minimum wage, and an overtime rate consequently not much better) a postie would have to do over 30 hours a week overtime to achieve this "average" sum.

Those nice bosses at Royal Mail also claimed that in order to get more overtime and indeed merely because they were "lazy", posties strung out their first deliveries past the 9.30am national cut-off time for first deliveries. This is a great joke because, although all deliveries *are* supposed to finish by 9.30am, the size and weight of deliveries now makes it impossible on most days, even when posties come into work early (and unpaid) and use their own cars for delivery, which is what far too many are forced to do these days.

After reading these nice comments, posties around Reading suddenly saw a new use for lamp-posts and old bits of rope.....

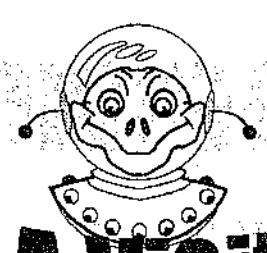
(Continued from page 4)

strike themselves in order to quell this rash of wildcat actions. They are also worried that Royal Mail is trying to make decisions without consulting them, thereby freeezing them out of their position as middle-men. The last time the union called a national strike, in 1988, it was more because Royal Mail had stopped talking to them than anything else! Of course, now, as then, there is a great deal of resentment and anger building up over various issues in Royal Mail. For delivery staff the future looks bleak. They know what has happened to sorting staff at the big offices around the country over recent years.

For the union to retain its position of authority it has to channel its members anger in ways it can control. Apart from the reason that they are hard to control, unnofficial strikes are opposed by the union because if Royal Mail can prove in court that the union did not do its utmost to stop the action then it can be fined (as it has been). The threat of a fine still hangs over the union if any wayward shop steward endorses the action at their particular office. Shop stewards *opposing* such widely supported action makes them look ridiculous. (Organising a ballot takes at least a month). This tension between the Union and *its representatives* on the shop floor could lead to the emergence of some kind of unnofficial shop stewards committee, especially in the cities.

Looking both ways at once

Shop stewards, of course, are pulled in two directions, by the demands of their fellow workers and by the demands of the union, which at all costs wants to preserve its position in the hierarchy and the health of the business. It would be a step forward if any potential unnofficial shop stewards committee was in fact an unnofficial *workers* committee. Shop stewards in the 1970's were aware of the limits of the shop stewards movements of that time. The union was perceived as an enemy of working class action (more a friend of the bosses and the status quo, etc) but there was not the ability to go outside of it. Maybe now there will be, as has happened in various industries in other parts of Europe in the last few years. (But don't hold your breath!!)



A Visit to Planet ICC

Ever heard of the International Communist Current? Some of our readers will have, but if you haven't, don't worry, you haven't missed anything.

The I.C.C. are, on the face of it, a Left-Communist group who, on paper, defend some of the same basic class positions that groups like SUBVERSION do.

But if you look closer you will find a bizarre sect with an outlook on the world that calls to mind a person walking down the street wearing a Virtual Reality headset - oblivious of the real world around them they are intent on the images before their eyes.

It is beyond the scope of this article to provide a comprehensive critique of the groups politics and practice - their megalomania, their Nostradamus-like certainty about future events, their many "brilliant" theories and perspectives which explain the world in impressive detail (but not, unfortunately, the same world that the rest of us inhabit) and not least their thoroughly undemocratic practice.

Indeed, although some of us have attended public meetings the group has held (which, if nothing else, were an opportunity to combine a couple of pints with the chance of sometimes meeting new people interested in revolutionary politics) we have never written an article about them before, nor responded in Subversion to the attacks on us in their paper, World Revolution. This is because **we didn't think most of our readers would have been interested.**

However, after the outrageous lies they printed in WR #190 we felt we had to set the record straight.

continued on page 17

subversion reprints

Mexico - the Chiapas and the Zapatistas (By comrades in Greece)

Ex-Yugoslavia and Macedonia (from Greece)

The Development of Class Struggle in Nigeria (from COMMUNISM No 9, publication of the GCI, Belgium)

The Hunt for Red October - 10 Days that didn't overthrow capitalism - from WILDCAT magazine ,England.

All reprints are 50p each, including postage

The Best of Subversion, artciles from the first 11 issues. 75p inc p&p

Back issues still available, no's 14, 16 and 17 25p each for postage.

PROLETARIAN GOB

It is with great sadness that we must report the sudden death of the writer/producer of PROLETARIAN GOB. Apparently he died in Florida, USA, earlier this year after complications arising from a penis-extension operation.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STRIKES

Since the end of November 1995, a small selection of Employment Service Workers in various offices around the country, have been on indefinite strike against a miserable national pay offer and a further extension of performance related pay systems. This was before the recently announced budget cuts with their implications for jobs in the Service.

Up until February '96, the number of offices called out on strike, was being slowly increased alongside short "all out" regional strikes as part of the CPSA unions strategy of escalating action. Of course at this rate, it would have taken a further 12 months at least, to build up to anything really effective. Although the employers marginally increased the pay offer just prior to the first strikes, they haven't budged since. This is hardly surprising since the government, driven by the needs of a profit orientated economy in crisis, is determined to reduce the burden of state expenditure on profits. That means attacking the unemployed and the employed simultaneously. The connection between the two attacks is no more starkly shown than in this particular dispute.

The 'Customer Service' ideology, is clearly an attempt to weaken existing or forestall the emergence of collective action by both ES workers and the unemployed -

In order to reduce the number of unemployed claimants and the amounts of benefit paid out, the state needs to force them in to any old crap, low paid job or else into the cut-throat competition of 'self-employment'. By doing this, the state also, at the same time, increases pressure on those in work to moderate their demands and do as they're told.

To be effective, the new Job seekers Allowance and associated regulations need to be strictly enforced by ES workers at minimal cost. This means attacking basic pay and the collective action in support of general pay claims and introducing more individual incentive pay, based on targets for 'benefit disallowances', 'suspensions' and so on. Ironically, the 'states' ability to do this, is strengthened by ES workers own fears of becoming unemployed themselves!

Ludicrous as it may seem, the state has sought to develop the ideology of a "customer based service" even though the unemployed "customer" clearly has no 'choice' to go anywhere else. One small reflection of this has been the revamping of offices on a more 'user friendly' layout. Given the shit 'service' the unemployed get - and despite some bastards who get a kick out of humiliating the unemployed, this isn't the fault of ES workers - it's inevitable that some will occasionally lash out and not just with a few verbals! This in turn, helps promote a "hate the punters" mentality amongst some ES workers and a greater willingness to go along with their employers need to screw the unemployed even more. The unions are happy to enter into the fray at this stage, arguing for a return to screens and high level security etc, avoiding any serious confrontation over the real causes of the problem.

The 'Customer Service' ideology, is clearly an attempt to weaken existing or forestall the emergence of collective action by both ES workers and the unemployed - to get both to see their problems and the 'solutions' in individual terms, at the same time reinforcing the division between the two groups. This whole process forms a vicious downward spiral that can only benefit the employers and their state.

Such a spiral cannot be broken by Labour Party type reforms to the system or moral appeals to be nice to each other. The 'system' may not have been created by ES workers, but part of their job within the system involves 'policing' the unemployed whether they admit it or not. In normal every day circumstances, when unemployed claimant meets employed ES worker, there is a real and immediate conflict of interest which cannot be wished away by abstract appeals for class unity, however much the interests of both may be the same in the long term.

It is only in the abnormal circumstances of a strike, when ES workers are no longer carrying out the states function, that a small opening appears through which divisions can start to be broken down. That still won't happen if the real differences between the situation of the employed and unemployed are simply glossed over. It can only come through face to face confrontation of ideas and the building of mutual support based on an understanding of each others situations. It requires the building of common objectives and common 'demands', not just moral support for each others 'demands'.

In this process, the trade unions are a barrier. They have their own interests to pursue within the established order that require them to maintain sectionalism and parochialism within our class. This they typically 'appeal' to the employers on the basis that a contented work force will do the employers bidding more enthusiastically. They actually reinforce the division with the unemployed by pointing out to employers and the 'public', that failure to settle the strike is resulting in 'over payments' to the unemployed. A good reason,if for no other reason, where it's true, for the unemployed to support the strike in our opinion.

Since the unions really do want to get back to 'normal' working as soon as possible, they do their best to avoid any really effective action. The CPSA, under pressure from its members to extend the strikes, has decided to call a ballot whilst at the same time stopping the existing strikes! - effectively enforcing its own 'cooling down' period. We'll see if ES workers fall for that

Solidarity, Good and Bad!

As an unemployed member of Subversion things look quite different to me. My quarrels with the other article are summarised in this article, sometimes in the form of questions.

The essential question is: what is the basis for unity among various groups of workers? It must be not merely a long-term interest in the abolition of capitalism but also a common interest in struggle here and now. This is where the structural relationship among groups of employees assumes an important role.

What I mean is moststarkly manifested in the case of cops. It might be arguedthat a rank and file cop would a: benefit from the establishment of a communist society and b: be inclined totake industrial action for higher wages. But the nature of the job they do means that whenever any class struggle breaks out, the cop is always on the other side (and indeed is very often the most immediate enemy of the workers in struggle). This means there is no realistic basis for unity between cops and ourselves. This is what I mean by the structural relationship of the jobs themselves. This is easy to see in the case of the cops, but the relationships are not always so clear cut in the case of various other professions.

So the next question is: how different are the Employment Service workers from cops? The amount of common nature they have is strongly understated by the other article, in my view.

This is something we have to think about properly, since we're talking about who's part of our class and who isn't (I'm quite sure that the cops are not part of the working class).

What the Employment Service workers have in common with the cops is essentially that merely by doing their job, i.e. regardless of their ideology or personal inclinations, they act to repress a significant part of the class.

It might be objected that all work for capitalist bosses means acting to reproduce capitalism and thereby help to oppress the working class. True enough, in the direct, active agents of oppression (an example often used here is the difference last analysis, but there's a difference between that and being between journalists who write reactionary, anti-working class bollocks and the printworkers who print it - the former are in a quite different category because they have personal control over what they are doing, using their initiative and ingenuity in their role of conscious reactionaries).

Employment Service workers are often in positions where they decide exactly what to do with this or that claimant, whether to give them a hard time at an interview, whether to make them go on a course, and the like.

My personal experience is that individual workers at a dole office vary between some who are alright and some who are total bastards, but it is conceivable that there are one or two cops (somewhere in the world) who as individuals have good motivations.

It is no wonder, given this structural antagonism that, as the other article says, there often arises a "hate the punters" mentality among these workers. This is a telling phrase, because "punter" is of course a derogatory term used by the petty bourgeoisie for us workers in our role of "customer".

The article talks about how if the strike advances and forges links with unemployed workers then the Employment Service workers might stop being reliable agents of the state for a time. Hardly a prospect to inspire feelings of solidarity among the breasts of the unemployed, is it? To me, this is like asking slaves to support higher wages for the overseers in return for them going a bit easier with the lash for a few weeks afterwards.

I believe it is a fundamental principle that solidarity among workers must be on the basis of equality. As such, I think that any offering of support to the Employment Service workers dispute must be conditional. That means, we say to them: "We will support you, but only if you undertake to cease policing our class." That means not only not implementing the Jobseekers' Allowance, but not coming down heavy on us in Restart interviews, forcing us to go to Jobclubs, etc.

One idea would be for a group of unemployed workers to produce a leaflet putting this forward, and giving it to the Employment Service workers involved in the dispute. At least it should make some of them think.

Solidarity which is not on the basis of equality is a pitiful thing: it is like kneeling and kissing the hand of a social superior in the hope of being looked on with favour. Our class should have more dignity than that.

Employment Service Strikes

continued from previous page

one! - or decide to take control of, and extend the strike themselves through their own direct action (both within the Employment Service and to others in the public sector threatened with performance related pay).

A move outside the control of the trade unions and an opening out of the strike to other workers, employed and unemployed, would be the most positive thing that could happen. In this situation, opportunities for some real class unity might emerge.

We are not saying that understandings and links forged in such a situation between ES workers and the unemployed are going to create any permanent basis of solidarity, but they can demonstrate what might be possible within the framework of a much more widespread escalation of class struggle in the future. Even in the shorter term, a victory for ES workers won in this way, with the support of the unemployed, could be beneficial to unemployed workers by making ES workers less reliable agents of the state for a time.

THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

The End of

This year is the 60th anniversary of the Spanish Civil War, which began in July 1936 when General Franco led a fascist coup to replace the left-wing Republican government.

It was no coincidence that this happened at a time of intense class struggle in Spain. Limited concessions granted in the face of the struggle by the left wing of the ruling class - the 'Popular Front' government elected in February 1936 - had not succeeded in restoring the economic and social stability needed by capitalism. Strikes, demonstrations and political assassinations by the working class continued, as did land seizures and local insurrections in the countryside. The right wing of the ruling class recognised that strong-arm measures were needed, and acted accordingly.

in one sense the revolt was an immediate success: the working class and peasants sacrificed the struggle for their own needs and demands and united with liberal and radical supporters of capitalism in a fight to defend one form of capitalist domination - democracy - against another - fascism.

Initially, across one half of Spain the right-wing coup was stalled by armed resistance from peasants and the working class, and only after three years of civil war was the fascist victory secured. But in one sense the revolt was an immediate success: the working class and peasants sacrificed the struggle for their own needs and demands and united with liberal and radical supporters of capitalism in a fight to defend one form of capitalist domination - democracy - against another - fascism.

However, that is not the aspect of the Spanish Civil War which we want to look at here. Instead, we want to focus on another important feature: the influence of anarchist ideas during the struggle in Spain.

ANARCHISM AND THE SPANISH 'REVOLUTION'

At the time of the Civil War, a popular idea amongst the Spanish working class and peasants was that each factory, area of land, etc., should be owned collectively by its workers, and that these 'collectives' should be linked with each other on a 'federal' basis - that is, without any superior central authority.

This basic idea had been propagated by anarchists in Spain for more than 50 years. When the Civil War began, peasants and working class people in those parts of the country which had not immediately fallen under fascist control seized the opportunity to turn anarchist ideal into reality.

Ever since then anarchists have regarded the Spanish 'Revolution' as the finest achievement in the history of the revolutionary movement - as the closest capitalism anywhere has come to being completely overthrown and replaced by a totally different form of society.

SELF-MANAGED' CAPITALISM

The 'revolution' in the countryside has usually been seen as superior to the 'revolution' in the towns and cities. Anarchist historian and eyewitness of the collectives, Gaston Leval, describes the industrial collectives as simply another form of capitalism, managed by the workers themselves: "Workers in each undertaking took over the factory, the works, or the workshop, the machines, raw materials, and taking advantage of the continuation of the money system and normal capitalist commercial relations, organised production on their own account, selling for their own benefit the produce of their labour."

We would add that in many cases the workers didn't actually take over production; they simply worked under the direction of 'their own' union bureaucrats with the old bosses retained as advisors.

The reactionary consequences of the working class taking sides in the fight between democracy and fascism, instead of pursuing the struggle for their own needs, was particularly evident in the way the industrial collectives operated. For the sake of the 'war effort' workers frequently chose to intensify their own exploitation - usually with the encouragement of their anarchist leaders.

In 1937, for example, the anarchist Government Minister in charge of the economy in Catalonia complained that the "state of tension and over-excitement" produced by the outbreak of the Civil War had "reduced to a dangerous degree the capacity and productivity of labour, increasing the costs of production so much that if this is not corrected rapidly and energetically we will be facing a dead-end street. For these reasons we must readjust the established work norms and increase the length of the working day."
However, although some anarchists are prepared to criticise the 'Government Anarchists' and the industrial collectives, all anarchists are

WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' COLLECTIVES

Anarchism?

unanimous that the rural collectives succeeded in achieving 'genuine socialisation', or, as it was popularly termed, 'libertarian communism'.

ORGANISING THE RURAL COLLECTIVES

What typically happened in the peasant villages was this. Once the fascist rebellion had been quelled locally, the inhabitants of the village got together in a big meeting. Anarchist militants took the initiative in proposing what to do. Everyone was invited to pool their land, livestock and tools in the collective: 'The concept 'yours and mine' will no longer exist...Everything will belong to everyone." Property belonging to fascist landlords and the Church was also expropriated for the collective's use. A committee was elected to supervise the running of the collective. Work was parcelled out among groups of 10 or 15 people, and co-ordinated by meetings of delegates nominated by each group.

FREE ACCESS

A few collectives distributed their produce on the communist basis of free access - 'to each according to their needs'. A resident of Magdalena de Pulpis explained the system in his village:

"Everyone works and everyone has the right to what he needs free of charge. He simply goes to the store where provisions and all other necessities are supplied. Everything is distributed freely with only a notation of what he took."

For the first time in their lives people could help themselves to whatever they needed. And that's exactly what they did. Free access was not abused by 'greed' or 'gluttony'. Another of the collectives' eyewitnesses, Augustin Souchy, describes the situation in Muniesa:

"The bakery was open. Anyone can come for whatever bread he wants. 'Are there not abuses of this?' 'No,' answers the old man who gives out the bread. 'Everyone takes as much as they actually need.' Wine is also distributed freely, not rationed. 'Doesn't anyone get drunk?' 'Until now there has not been a single case of drunkenness'."

(This was also partly a reflection of an anarchist puritanism which in other places led them to ban tobacco and even coffee).

THE WAGES SYSTEM

However, distribution of goods on a communist basis (i.e. free access) was not the norm. In the vast majority of collectives the level of consumption was not governed by people's freely-chosen needs and desires, but, just as it is under capitalism, by the amount of money people had in their pockets. Only goods in abundant supply could be taken freely. Everything else had to be bought from wages paid by the collective to its members.

Far from being abolished, as money would be in a communist revolution, during the Spanish 'Revolution' money proliferated as never before!

THE FAMILY WAGE AND THE OPPRESSION OF WOMEN

The 'family wage' - which oppresses women by making them economically dependent on the male head of the household - was adopted by almost all the collectives. Each male collectivist received so much in wages per day for himself, plus a smaller amount for his wife and each child. For women in fact, the Spanish 'Revolution' could hardly have been less revolutionary.
It did not challenge the family as an conomic unit of society, nor the sexual division of labour between men and women. "It is eleven o'clock in the morning. The gong sounds. Mass? It is to remind the women to prepare the midday meal." Women also remained regarded as inferior social beings, frowned on, for example, if they joined the men in the local cafe for a drink after work.

THE PROLIFERATION OF MONEY

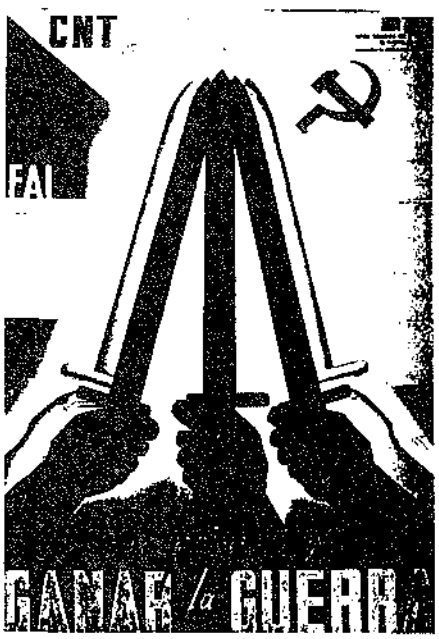
The equal family wage was generally not paid in the national currency, which most collectives discarded for internal use. In its place the collectives substituted other means of exchange, issuing their own local currency in the form of vouchers, tokens, rationing booklets, certificates, coupons, etc. Far from being abolished, as money would be in a communist revolution, during the Spanish 'Revolution' money proliferated as never before!

But the creation of literally hundreds of different local currencies soon caused problems. Few collectives were self-sufficient, but trade among the collectives was hampered by the lack of a universally acceptable currency. In 1937 the Aragon Federation of Peasant Collectives had to reintroduce a standard currency in the form of a uniform rationing booklet for all the Aragon Collectives. It also established its own bank - run by the Bank Workers' Union of course!

THE EXCHANGE OF GOODS

Not all the transactions between collectives were effected by money. Central warehouses were set up where collectives exchanged their surplus produce among themselves for the goods they lacked. Under this system 'hard cash' was frequently absent. However, the relative proportions in which goods were bartered was still

Spain 1936 continued



A joint CNT/FAI and Stalinist poster, it tells workers to remember that ***"the first thing is to win the***

determined by monetary values. For example how many sacks of flour a collective could obtain in exchange for a ton of potatoes was worked out by calculating the value of both in monetary terms. Just as under capitalism, prices were "based on the cost of raw materials, the work involved, general expenses and the resources of the collectivists".

This was not a communist system of production for use and distribution according to need, but a capitalist system of rival enterprises trading their products according to their exchange value. No matter how desperately they needed them, collectives couldn't obtain the goods they required until they had produced enough to exchange for them, since they were not allowed to withdraw a sum of goods worth more than those they had deposited. This frequently led to great hardship among the less wealthy collectives.

MARKET COMPETITION

As well as trading among themselves, collectives also had to find markets for their goods in competition with non-collectivised enterprises. A common consequence of this system has always been that goods which cannot be sold profitably end up being stockpiled or destroyed, while elsewhere people have to do without those goods because they don't have the means to buy them. The consequences of the Spanish collectives' capitalist mode of

This was not a communist system of production for use and distribution according to need, but a capitalist system of rival enterprises trading their products according to their exchange value.

operation conformed to this pattern; for example:

"The warehouses owned by the SICEP (Syndicate of the Footwear Industry in Elda and Petrel) in Elda, Valencia and Barcelona, as well as the factory warehouses, were full of unsold goods, valued at some 10 million pesetas."

Such spectacles would be eradicated for ever in a communist society, where goods would not be produced to be sold for profit via the market, but to directly satisfy people's needs.

THE END OF THE COLLECTIVES

The Spanish collectives were eventually destroyed by in-fighting among the anti-fascists and by the fascist victory itself. One can only speculate about how they might have developed had they survived the Civil War. Our guess is that their basically capitalist nature would have become even more obvious.

In the capitalist economy market competition forces every enterprise to try to produce its goods as cheaply as possible so as to undercut its rivals. The Spanish collectives, trading with each other and competing with non-collectivised enterprises, would inevitably have been subject to the same pressures.

One of the ways in which capitalist enterprises try to cut costs is by increasing the exploitation of the workforce, for example by cutting wages, or increasing the intensity of work, or lengthening working hours.

Where this happens in enterprises owned and run by an individual boss or the state, workers can identify their enemy and fight against their exploitation. This is far less likely to happen where the entire workforce itself is the collective owner and manager of the enterprise, as was the case with the Spanish collectives. The workforce has a vested interest in the profitability of the capital which it collectively owns; it identifies with and willingly organises its own exploitation. It has to, in fact, to keep itself in business.

THE END OF ANARCHISM

Many present-day anarchists still stand for the type of self-managed capitalism established by the industrial and agricultural collectives during the Spanish Civil War. Because of this, we oppose them as resolutely as we oppose supporters of any other pro-capitalist ideology.

From the point of view of working class people's needs, self-managed capitalism is a dead-end, just as reactionary as private or state capitalism. The communist society we are fighting for can only be established by the complete destruction of ALL property, money, wages and markets - whatever their form.

The information and quotes in this article come from
The Anarchist Collectives by Sam Dolgoff,
Collectives In The Spanish Revolution by Gaston Leval,
The Spanish Revolution by Stanley Payne
With the Peasants Of Aragon by Augustin Souchy

Dockers' Dispute Merseyside

In earlier reports I have attempted to put together some thoughts on the dockers dispute [note it is NOT a strike but a lock out - something that 9 weeks into it the SWP still had not realised] and to draw out some of the implications for any future movement.

From early on in the present dispute the dockers have been holding open mass meetings to gather support. This is a sea change in itself, but as dockers got up in front of their mates and perfect strangers to tell their story, inevitably they concentrated on the character of industrial relations post 1989 and the end of the Devlin scheme nationally. With the dispute over, the dockers went back to work as a body. There were supposed to be no recriminations, no victimisations. Officially this was the time of new more 'realistic' labour relations on the dock. The port prospered - with huge injections of public money, new traffic came, old traffic was won back, presumably from the former non registered ports, whose for breaking the dispute was short lived.

After 1989 . . .

However the dockers knew that this truce could only be temporary. Very soon the crack down came. And it came in the form of an all out attempt to break and humiliate the men. Dockers were put to work on their hands and knees to scrub toilets and other shitty jobs of which there are no shortage on a dock. This was the dockers 'victory'. One man described in vivid and moving detail how he was moved to tears to see his mate on his hands and knees.

He went on to describe how they hugged one another in their mutual despair and out of this found a new strength for each other. No one can begin to understand this dispute unless they appreciate this change in the attitude of the dockers. In the past disputes or strikes would be run by a small group of stewards - the 'rank and file' would be told to go home, dig the garden or paper the back bedroom, while the leaders got on with the job of 'running' the dispute - which usually involved shuttling between national union officials and the personnel office until the inevitable compromise deal was struck.

When a hairy arsed docker stands in front of perfect strangers and is visibly moved to tears in describing his experiences, you know that something quite profound is going on.

Another aspect of the previously sectional nature of the dock is the degree to which jobs were passed on from father to son. The dockers have received some criticism for this - one of the conditions for settling the previous dispute in 1989 was that sons of dockers should be first in line when new dockers were being hired. This was criticised in a leaflet put out by a Trotskyist grouping called the ICP in November, which went on to argue for getting rid of the existing stewards, and especially the chair, Jimmy Nolan. Now Mr Nolan makes no secret of the fact that he is an unrepentant Stalinist. And while the criticism of the ICP may be formally correct in much of what it says, it actually ignores the fact that on Merseyside at least [and I suspect in other areas of the country] it is well accepted that jobs should be passed on from father to son. This is understood almost as part of the post Second World War consensus - just as the National Health Service and Education are understood as a 'right'. We ought perhaps to research exactly what the full implications are of the break up of this consensus and the end of 'welfarism' that many of us talk about. it's not the same

In the past disputes or strikes would be run by a small group of stewards - the 'rank and file' would be told to go home, dig the garden or paper the back bedroom, while the leaders got on with the job of 'running' the dispute

Tactically at least, the fact that the new dockers are in many cases related to the 'Devlin' generation was supposed to make it easier to solidify a younger generation into a common struggle to improve conditions. This is part of what we might call the 'collective intelligence' that is so much a feature of this dispute, and which deserves greater recognition. For its part the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company [MDHC] had set up various front organisations so that they could 'offer' worse terms and conditions to new workers. In the event, Torside, a firm fronted by an ex-docker with his redundancy money, used the MDHC to negotiate less than full rates and reduced pension rights. For the time being the stewards accepted this deal. So we had all the ingredients for a renewed confrontation. That to some extent this present conflict has been

Dockers continued

'organised' and prepared for by the MDHC, there can be no doubt.

It is this fact alone which illustrates starkly the changed background to this dispute. The firm charged with recruiting scab labour, Drake International, operates security and bailiff services and has a trained dock labour force in Southampton some of whom have been hired to train the scabs. Information about this firm and its global activities is needed by the dockers.

The 1990s are not the 1970s - Many of the more astute dockers had thought that over time, as they had done in the past, they could steadily improve all dockers terms and conditions. This is after all the kind of class struggle they were used to - it had served them well in the past. It also makes a nonsense of the ICP's criticism of Stalinist 'betrayal' of the dockers. Jimmy Nolan who is the oldest of the stewards and a survivor of the struggles of the 70s, is only able to have any influence precisely because he gives voice to the dockers own view of themselves and their struggle.

So when a dispute erupted at Torside and these workers put an illegal picket on the gate, the MDHC knew perfectly well that no docker would cross it and likely scab on his son. MDHC already had the dismissal letters typed for 500 dockers and the offer of new worse, individual contracts, some of which were hand delivered in taxies to dockers homes. [Now where did they learn that trick ?]

Casualisation, globalisation

We come therefore to the second new aspect of this dispute - the drive towards casualisation. In the past in the 1960s and 70s, firms could offer increases in wages and improvements in conditions secure in the knowledge that if the 'productivity' improvements negotiated, failed to materialise, [as they often didnæt - due to workers resistance] then inflation would soon let them increase prices and avoid any losses. This planned use of inflation [on the docks, the Devlin deal] to defuse the class struggle relied on each nation state being able to independently manage its monetary and fiscal policy without outside interference. In the 90s two things have happened to upset this.

1 Increases in global competition - via GATT and the rise of the so called 'tiger economies' of the Far East. Costs, principally wage costs are being equalised throughout the world. The nation state can no longer isolate its labour market from the world - so we are beginning to see world cycles of class struggle.
2 Because labour is being continually expelled from the productive process each nation state is finding it harder to absorb the rising costs of welfare - as a result the old social democratic welfare state is steadily being unwound. In France, Italy and Belgium, this has already caused huge backlashes amongst a working class vainly trying to defend its position inside the state

We have only indicated the broadest themes here, this does not pretend to be an analysis of these trends. For our purpose we are interested in what effects this is having on struggles such as the dockers. One of the consequences of the increased international contact that the dockers have had is the common realisation that portworkers internationally have all suffered the same types of attack on their wages and conditions. In conversations with dockers all over the world, the common starting date for this attack has been identified as 1989. Someone, somewhere with access to specialist shipping publications should be able to document and demonstrate this.

Locally, the MDHC has been propped up in the past at considerable cost to state funds and the Government is still a major shareholder. It is time that this investment 'paid off' in the form of quicker turn round for ships, cargo and vehicles. Shipowners and operators are quick to make international comparisons of labour costs, something which dockers need to take into account. For instance they are aiming at a lorry turn round time of 45 minutes rather than the present 3 hours. A major obstacle to the employers reducing costs is the existing organisation and outlook [or if you like the 'collective intelligence referred to earlier] of dock workers. We are no longer therefore talking of the old kind of struggle - casualisation is

the means whereby the dock company, shipowners and transport firms can drive down costs. If this means 12 hour shifts, annual hours contracts, constant 'call outs', no premium for weekend or night work, disrupted family life, stress and so on - then so be it.

Casualisation is therefore the issue which binds these workers together, even though Eric Leatherbarrow for the MDHC takes great pains to deny it on every public occasion - hence the dockers demand for reinstatement on their old terms. It also of course, explains why the dock company will almost certainly not give in. We are not talking of the old style casualisation of the notorious 'pen' of the 50s, but a modern 'social' form. With each worker isolated in his own home at the end of a telephone line.

This is very basic and goes to the heart of what we might call workers collectivity. When unions first came about in this country, they were no more than conspiracies to try and blunt or frustrate the effects of competition, worker against worker. Our rulers, realising that attempting to prevent 'combination' might easily provoke a revolutionary alternative, allowed this new institution to grow, gave it legal immunity, and eventually granted unions a place in the management of the system.

At the time of writing [early February] it is now almost four months since around 500 dockers were dismissed for refusing to cross a picket line [or for 'illegal secondary action' in the jargon of modern industrial relations] in support of almost 80 men in dispute with an 'independent' stevedoring firm called Torside. The dockers employed by MDHC have just overwhelmingly rejected [in an 'official' secret ballot organised by the TGWU for a dispute that is illegal and unofficial] an offer of 40 jobs under the new conditions and ú25 000 for the rest - or about ú8 million in total. The men employed by the new firms, Torside and Nelson have still to vote, but they are only being offered ú1000 AND they must give up their claims for unfair dismissal. Of course the major feature of the offer is that they must immediately give up their international campaign to get Liverpool boats blacked - a sure sign that it is effective.

It should be noted that the older men, some with only a year or to go risk the prospect of losing everything - lump sum, pension and so on as a consequence of this dispute. The price will be the acceptance of new, individual contracts by the younger workers and the need to work alongside approximately 200 scabs who have been recruited. We shall see if the dockrs can remain united in their opposition to this kind of deal. At a mass meeting [which are regular Friday morning features of this dispute, held in the TGWU headquarters in Islington - more about this later], this latest 'offer' was overwhelmingly rejected by a show of hands, despite a vicar and a priest arguing that 'it was the best that could be obtained in the circumstances'. The result of the ballot was accurately predicted by the stewards, which is a good indication of the confidence they enjoy. We have talked at great length about the background to this dispute and only mentioned the dockers themselves in passing. This is perhaps unfair. There is much that is positive to report.

The beginning of a new movement ?

First of all we should stress that this is an all inclusive dispute. Although 'run' by the existing shop stewards, perhaps 20 in number and we have had our criticism of the stewards movement in the past; criticisms which we still stand by, it would be utterly counter-productive to go into them now. There is no doubt that the existing stewards enjoy the confidence and overwhelming support of the mass of dockers locked out - for in a real sense they represent them. The stewards conception of struggle, their hopes and fears are exactly the same as those of the dockers themselves. It should be noted that the dispute committee is not composed solely of stewards and in any case for such a small group of workers there are far more than normally would be found in industry. Common experience in Ford's for example is for a steward to 'represent' over 100 workers. This may reflect the particular history of collective organisation on the dock, a subject on which a library of books could be written. Other dockers on the committee are there simply because they have a history of standing up for themselves, they naturally come to the fore in such a situation. Open meetings are held weekly - and they are genuinely open, anyone may attend although not vote. There is a huge amount of self activity. This is not a dispute that can be fought in the old way.

Over 1000 meetings have been addressed around the country and abroad. Delegations appealing for practical solidarity have gone to North America, Australia and Europe. Benefits and other forms of activity have been organised. All this has so far been done not by relying on union officials or the like but by the dockers and their families and supporters. In the process many workers have been transformed, but they can tell their own story now.

What lessons have been learned ?

Undoubtedly the dockers international campaign asking for solidarity - in reality getting Liverpool boats 'blacked' or the threat of it - has been the major factor obliging MDHC to make an offer to men they have already dismissed. Rather like attacking the tentacles of an octopus, the dockers have systematically set about cutting one by one every shipping line that works into Liverpool. So delegations have gone to the the East Coast of the USA and Canada, also to Italy, Spain, Israel, Australia and New Zealand. It is worth looking in some detail at how this has been done, since once again the dockers have come in for some criticism.

Open meetings are held weekly - and they are genuinely open, anyone may attend although not vote. There is a huge amount of self activity. This is not a dispute that can be fought in the old way.

It has been alleged, once again by the ICP, in yet another of their attempts to 'parachute' themselves into this dispute that,

(Continued on page 14)

Merseyside Dockers

(Continued from page 13)

'the stewards were not building an international movement of the working class, but touting the labour of the Liverpool dockers around the boardrooms of the world, while building links with other union bureaucrats equally eager to establish such relations with big business on a global scale. Their banner expresses this corporatist perspective very succinctly. It carries the slogan, Liverpool dockers the best in Europe'.'
[from 'Liverpool dock dispute in danger' - a leaflet given out by the ICP 19 January 1996]

Now I have no particular reason to 'have a go' at the ICP, but since the rest of the 'Left' has utterly failed to have anything to say at all beyond the usual stupidities about 'mass pickets' and so on, the ICP have been the only grouping with a coherent 'line' - which is that the existing trade union movement and especially the shop stewards

It is clear that to some extent for instance the TGWU is involved in recruiting the scab labour

must immediately be replaced if the dockers are to win.

This is an interesting and, for Trotskyists, unorthodox view. In many ways the ICP are symptomatic of the crisis that is working its way through contemporary 'Left' politics, which is why I am using the example. In the 1970s I and several others came to be similarly critical of the unions and shop stewards, BUT however radical this critique might seem, it means nothing without a fundamental rethinking of the process through which a new movement might emerge, and the vitally changed content of such a movement.

Internationalism . . . in practice

Let us deal with process first. The ICP go on in their leaflet to say,

'the fundamental lesson of this experience is that genuine internationalism cannot be organised by the existing trade unions. the role of the stewards throughout has been to direct that action into bureaucratic channels, effectively stifling it and using it not to strengthen the working class, but to build relations with transnational companies.' [op. cit.]
Nobody least of all the dockers would disagree with the first sentence. It is clear that to some extent for instance the TGWU is involved in recruiting the scab labour from the south. Photographs of the scabs have been matched to union members in other regions. So whoever ends up working on the dock, the TGWU gets to represent them. Internationally, all the delegates have come back with stories of union attempts to sabotage and obstruct them. As to the last sentence, if is true it is a serious allegation indeed - however the dockers who have seen this leaflet have dismissed it as laughable nonsense. What then, can have caused the ICP to risk what little credibility they have by repeating it?

Firstly in the concrete situation the dockers and the stewards found themselves in, they had no option but to go through the existing union channels, such as they were, to get the solidarity they needed. No-one who knows anything of the history of this particular section of workers can be in any doubt that they fully expect the TGWU and its officials to try to sabotage the dispute - but since the union fears sequestration of its funds and assets above all else, the union has limited its efforts to behind the scenes manoeuvring in international organisations such the ITWF, the full story of this has yet to come out. Publicly it wants 'negotiations', this is after all what unions are for - to negotiate the sale of wage labour, so that the process of producing surplus value [and paying union dues] can go on as before. This is why the dockers have organised so much themselves, without relying on full time officials and so on.

So far as international contacts are concerned, all the political groupings have proved singularly ineffective. Anyone with direct contacts in any of the cities visited by the dockers would have been of more practical use than all the 'international organisation' that have gathered round this dispute. In reality the various dockers delegations have had to 'find their own way'. Sometimes this has meant dealing with union officials in union offices miles away from a dock, sometimes it has meant mounting their own picket on a dock as in the USA. [This incidentally gives the lie to much of the impression in this country that American workers are not class conscious - picket lines are respected more there than perhaps they are at the moment in this country.] On other occasions,
as in Italy, they have had to negotiate with 'worker bosses', since with the Eurocommunism and the Historic Compromise of the CP [now PDS],

Subversion Pamphlets

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docks in Italy are now 'cooperatively owned', but on other occasions they were face to face with other dockers in the hold of a ship. This is hardly the picture painted by the ICP, and in all this the dockers managed to obtain most of their objectives. This shows a skill and political maturity in action way beyond the 'corporatist' label that has been applied.

But of course nothing comes about in a 'pure' fashion, at least not pure enough for the ICP. They are of course quite correct to criticise the slogan, 'Liverpool dockers the best in Europe' but such a slogan is only a reflection of the dockers own view of themselves and their struggle - not a slogan that a group of stewards has forced on them. It is in any case being used ironically since that is the description used by the dock bosses only three weeks before the dispute broke out. If it is to be criticised, and it should be, it should be done in such a way that the majority of workers understand it and as an aid to help them break from it. As I have said in earlier reports, the contradiction of going all over the world asking for solidarity action from other dockers and port workers, whilst at the same time proclaiming yourself 'the best in Europe' has not been lost on some of the more astute dockers - but they are the only ones who can overcome it - and they can only do that in practice.

Trade Unions again

As to the longer term question of the trade unions, the fact is that 500 dockers in one port do not have the social weight to fight the trade unions locally or nationally. Unions will not be overcome and ultimately destroyed by sections of workers struggling in isolation from one another. For the docks dispute, dockers have gone outside union channels and by preferring to rely on their own efforts, have provided a model and an inspiration for the future. But as they will tell you, to have gone all out against the union would have isolated them even more than at present. It would certainly have made the job of organising their international conference on February 17th much more difficult.

One of the features of this dispute, which will be denied by the 'Left', but is nevertheless a fact and must be accounted for, has been the inability of the dockers to persuade the existing 'movement' - of shop stewards, combine committees and so on, to mount any kind of effective solidarity action.

Now we have argued that this is merely a reflection of how securely tied the shop stewards and other 'rank and file' type organisations are to the existing union apparatus. Tied that is because they lack any independent basis other than the union apparatus itself. Until a movement independent of the unions arises and in the process either transforms or destroys this form of organisation, then it makes no sense to talk of the shop stewards 'betraying' the workers.

It's the cuts lads... one copper to two scabs

We are coming close now to the content of any new movement, and to show that we are not talking of some far off distant future, I want to illustrate the above with a story. Around Christmas time, a strong rumour went round that the TGWU was planning to evict the dispute committee from the TGWU building in Islington.

Now the dockers are in almost permanent session in this building, and it has proved a valuable resource as an organising centre for all their activity. It has a conference room capable of seating over 500, a staffed canteen and several offices equipped with phones, faxes and so on. To lose it would have been a severe blow, but plans were being made to find an alternative. However, it was argued by some that should an attempt be made to shift them, then the building should be occupied and held against the union. In this writers opinion this might have totally transformed the situation - locally it would have polarised opinion in the city amongst workers, something which up to now the dockers have been unwilling to do [by for instance inciting violence against scabs, or attempting more than a token occupation of the dock]. It is clear that most dockers see the building as 'theirs', a view I would guess, shared by most workers and union members on Merseyside. The stage might have been set for just the kind of confrontation which might have shaken the union to its foundations - and probably this is why the union chose not to move against the dockers.

The point of the foregoing is to show that it is often the dynamics of the situation itself which determines the content of any movement, and not any preconceived plan of action by a 'leadership' however wise or omnipotent.

Class composition

One of the major questions to which I have been trying to find an answer, is, does this dispute contain any clues towards the new kind of struggle and movement of the future? I have already drawn attention to the differences between today and the 1970s and 80s, but a more detailed understanding is required. Although this is not the place to attempt such an analysis, I should like to draw attention to some features which I think are important.

First of all the changed nature of dockwork itself needs to be recognised. Many readers will imagine that it is largely unskilled and repetitive. This would be a mistake - dock work is varied and dangerous. Safe working prac-

(Continued on page 16)

Merseyside Docks Dispute

(Continued from page 15)
tices must be learned, and applied. Modern cargo handling is technically sophisticated and employs information technology to monitor and control the process. The old kind of casual working could never have provided the kind of labour which dock employers now need. In addition much of the old distinction between mental and manual labour has gone. Dock work like many other forms of work today, now demands the active intellectual engagement of the worker - hence the talk of empowerment, and team working and so on. We are seeing the creation of a new kind of worker in Western society, much changed from the one that gave birth to the mass movements of the 1970s.

It may for instance surprise readers to know that there is at least one PhD working on the dock, in addition many dockers wives and partners hold white collar and supervisory jobs in other industries and services. But of course this should come as no surprise, how many of us know or work alongside people who are not interested in promotion or in joining management, even though they undoubtedly have the technical ability and education ? It is only in moments such as this dispute that we are able to catch a glimpse of what we have called this new class composition. Sooner or later this new kind of worker will have to find a way of tackling the effects of casualisation and globalisation that we have identified.

This change has not come about without causing us problems. One of the major difficulties the dockers have had is in getting lorry drivers to respect their 'token' picket lines. Although they are correct to argue that it is impossible to 'stop the dock' as many on the Left argue, nevertheless it is a fact that many lorry drivers whilst personally sympathetic are obliged to drive through. Lorry drivers were a section of workers who in past were able to exercise some collective power - modern technology and the rapid financial concentration of the industry into something called 'logistics' - with tachographs, mobile phones, radio tracking and so on have robbed them of their former strength. Many of them are now 'casualised' or worse, driven to hire themselves as self employed day drivers. We need to be able to address this.

The old forms of organisation and methods of struggle will not work. At the very beginning of this dispute one f the committee said that they needed to make this struggle as much social as economic. This was a very profound comment for it recognised some of the factors we have talked about in this article.

So far however the dockers and their supporters have not been able to translate that wish into concrete practice. There are for instance in existence support groups around the country which have yet to make their voice heard. The women's organisation - Women of the Waterfront has still to ully find its feet. But its very existence marks an important break with the old kind of struggle.

In the short term the dockers are organising an international conference to discuss the themes of casualisation and globalisation and what should be workers response to it. Delegates will come from those ports that the dockers have visited, if they reflect the new kind of worker now in struggle in Liverpool, we may find some answers to the questions outlined here.

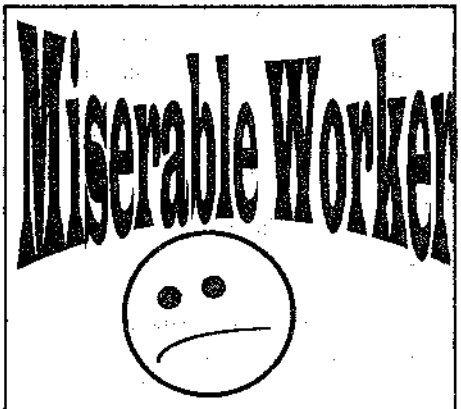
I hope to produce a report of proceedings at the conference which I shall circulate to all those who have already expressed an interest. If anyone else wants it or more copies of this article - send a 10' x 8' sized SAE to,

Dave Graham, PO Box 37, Liverpool, L36 9FZ

In the meantime the dockers committee can be contacted as follows:-

Jimmy Davies, Liverpool Dock Stewards Committee, Transport House, Islington, Liverpool,

L3 8EQ



The idea behind **Miserable Worker** was to produce a series of shortish leaflets expounding basic communist propaganda.

Readers are encouraged to use it. You are welcome to reprint it or photocopy it.

We would welcome your suggestions for other "issues".

You do not have to credit Subversion if you reuse it.

Escape from Planet ICC

Continued from Page 5

A LIE TOO FAR

In an article on page 4 entitled "Revolutionary Milieu must defend itself" they describe a visit to their last meeting by a Subversion member (the author of this article) and a friend who had never been to one of their meetings and was interested in finding out their views.

The article describes this visit as a deliberate attempt to sabotage their meeting by the new person, aided and abetted by Subversion!

Here's a sample of the article's argument:

[The new person]... *"wandered around the meeting room, then sat with his back to the praesidium* [this is what they call the table with the 2 I.C.C. members behind it!] *of the meeting and put his feet up on another chair. This disruptive performance soon took on spoken form. After asking a question on the situation in Bosnia, he responded that he didn't "give a shit about people dying" and that it was "only a few bombs".*

What actually happened:

The two of us arrived at the meeting. I sat down towards the back, and my friend looked at the bookstalls *("wandered around the meeting room")* and then sat at the side of the room, sideways on to the head table (the "praesidium"). In his first contribution to the meeting he commented that he believed Bosnia was not important to the ruling class, that it was they who didn't give a shit about people dying. The I.C.C. speaker then said how outrageous this was to disregard people dying etc. Whereupon my friend clarified his remarks, making clear he was saying that it was the ruling class who thought like that. The I.C.C. heard what he said. Their article is simply lying.

Later on in their article they say how the new person kept interrupting them, and then relate with outrage how Subversion and the Communist Workers' Organisation (a Left-Communist organisation who had a member present in the audience) both took the side of "the disrupter".

Let's be clear about another thing. At no time were there more than five people in the room (two I.C.C., one CWO., myself from Subversion and my "disruptive" friend). Yet the I.C.C. conducted the meeting with the "iron discipline" they revel in.

By "disruption" they mean trying to adopt a conversational approach more in keeping with a meeting of that size. Not to mention putting your feet up on a chair.

If you'd heard the way they carried on - this is our meeting, we are in control, you'll talk when we say so etc., you wouldn't have believed your ears. Although I've been to a fair number of their meetings over the years, this was the worst I've ever seen them, and frankly it was the last straw.

After denouncing their behaviour as Stalinist, I told them that they were little more than a religious sect and it would be the last time they'd see any of us at their meetings. My friend and I then walked out, and carried on drinking downstairs.

And the moral to this sordid tale?

Theory and Practice go together. The I.C.C.'s "theory" isolates them from reality. One of their most notorious ideas is the way they see almost everyone apart from themselves as part of a great conspiracy against the working class and its finest flower (themselves). They are currently raving with paranoia about how "parasitic" groups are trying to destroy them. They will probably see this article as part and parcel of this.

The account of this meeting shows a practice that conforms to this. A person who has never encountered them before and is genuinely interested in hearing what they've got to say attends one of their meetings and... they can't handle it! Within seconds they've decided he's a disrupter and a saboteur and a petty-bourgeois element.

You may happen to meet an I.C.C. member. Some of them are decent, likable people. Some of them are nasty shits. But whatever the individual is like, he or she functions as a cog in a machine. And it's a machine from hell!

When the I.C.C. first came into existence many year ago it was regarded by many revolutionaries as a positive development which held much potential. But it's been downhill all the way.

Analysis of the I.C.C. has moved out of the realm of polemic and into the realm of psychopathology.

LETTERS FROM AMERICA

These two letters were sent to us by readers in the USA. The first comes from a member of a group called Los Angeles Workers Voice. The second from a prisoner.

Dear comrades,

Our tiny marxist group in LA continues to discuss your ideas/goals. We have had much more time to do this over the recent period as the ongoing class motions/struggle have been in a funk.

We engaged in this summer/fall fights against the LA County social service cuts, but this ended up in a stinging defeat for workers: US$400 million cuts/probably up to 25 privatizations of health clinics this year & next year/3,200 sackings already & worker patients told to get more "outpatient care" for serious maladies, etc. Even though the labour union backs and some lefts (and the open bourgeois papers/media) say the establishment and their state through the federal loans/reimbursements "saved" the workers! Some "victory"! Many more workers now know better and the battles will begin anew in a few months.

For now, one can say that if a communist fraction even maintains semi-regular ties to groups of militant workers (and keep from getting pushed out of industry), this is a significant achievement!...

...I think I agree with you in your previous debates favouring revolutionary work amongst ordinary soldiers, sailors and airmen. There is a whole history of important soldier and sailor revolts this century in the imperialists' armed forces. When I was much younger in the late 60s and early 70s, I myself participated in anti-war and anti-militarist active duty and reservist groups who carried out important actions against the filthy US war on the Vietnamese. Hundreds of other stronger, more powerful anti-war actions took place at other military stations and bases all over the world and in the war zone itself. I know the agitation of marxists and revolutionary anarchists in these actions made a big difference and helped raise the consciousness of the GIs in struggle.

Many soldiers and sailors (drafted or economic hardship-enlistments) who are not in the officer corps can be won to taking up anti-capitalist politics and militant struggle, especially in a crisis situation. It is folly to mechanically compare them to "coppers" and "flatfoots", etc. as the coppers are a bourgeois elite handpicked ideologically reactionary group of janissaries/thugs who actually get their "kicks" out of defending the rich and brutalising workers, especially militants, and poor people.

"NC"

From a prisoner in Texas

Dear Folks at Subversion,

Greetings from the rectum of the beast. Wanted to express my thanks and high opinion of the crack work I see at Subversion. It is exactly the kind of cutting edge, up to date political analysis I am looking for! Not only am I in agreement with the political outlook, I also find the insight penetrating and nonrigid and all encompassing - which is exactly what we need in order to be effective. I hope you will continue to send me "Subversion" as I think it's fuckin' great. I really split my rib cage laughing at the cartoon "Keep it FLUFFY" with the great subverted mediated experience held there in placard form for the surveillance pigs' benefit! Haw! Haw! The symbolic implications of that cartoon leave quite a bit of food for thought for the contemplative anarchist! Can we spoonfeed them headfixing drivel and lies with their own technology?

Very Insurrectionally,
KG
P.S. Keep it Spikey!
P.P.S Loved the "Is OJ Innocent?" deal. I didn't watch one episode of his trial but am mighty glad it's done with. No doubt a diversionary tactic by the capitalist media in order to preclude concern over true issues!

Remember, a boss is a lot like a diaper. Always on your ass and usually full of shit!

Collective Action Notes
A publication from the USA.#The latest issue has articles on:
A Transitional Period - but to where
The Role of Immigrant Labour
A commentary on the Million Man March.
They have also recently published a pamphlet containing three artciles by Anton Pannekoek, the Dutch Council Communist. (It costs £3.00)
For more information write to :
COLLECTIVE ACTION NOTES
PO Box 22962, Balto.,MD21203, USA

If you like Subversion, then why not try:
Organise! publication of the ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St., London E1 7QX
Aufheben, c/o Prior House, Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY
Communist Headache, PO Box 446, Sheffield S1 1NY

Want to meet Subversion and other like minded folk in Manchester?

We are part of the **Manchester Class Struggle Group.**

The MCSG meets every fortnight. The venue is uncertain at the moment. If you want to come along, then drop us a line.

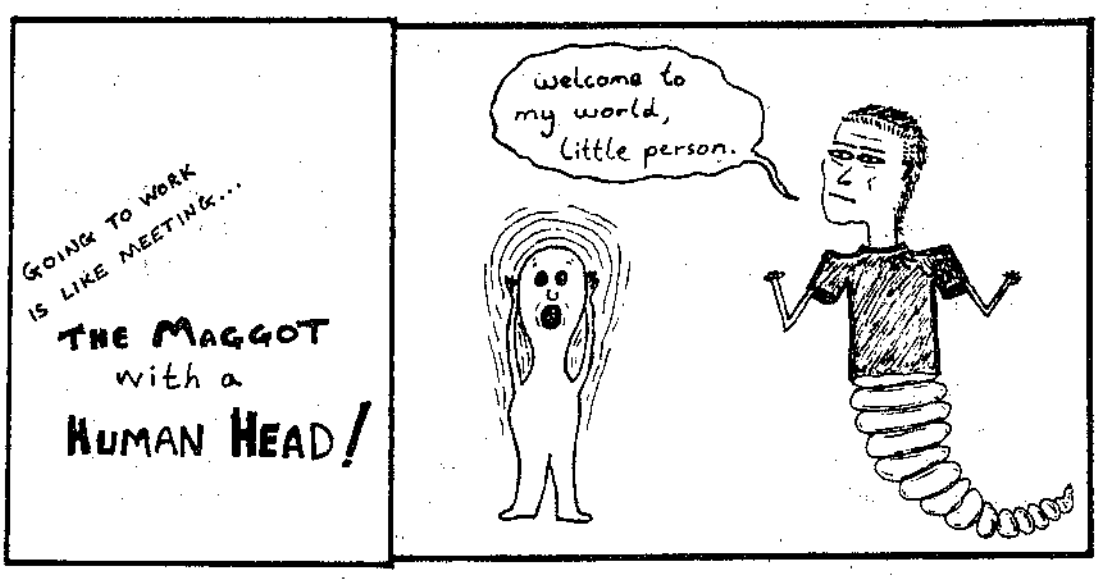
We have lost our dignity

That is what we all are - grateful and cowering dogs. We have given away most the dignity we could have because it is the only way to survive in this world. We crawl around like crippled sheep to keep our wages coming in, we do what we are told. We even agree with it all and try to join in with it. Why else do workers vote at election times unless it is to choose which people should have the right to tell us what to do! We have really sunk low when we actually put a cross against the names of the gangsters we'd prefer to hold power over us - we should have more dignity!

Democracy is just a game to get us believing we have a real choice and to get us to think we have a real say in society. The only time the we can hear our own voices above the constant babble of politicians, union leaders, newspapers and the television is when we take industrial action. You can tell how scared all our "elders and betters" are when we take our own initiative (eg. by working to rule, or going on strike, etc) because their response to us is nothing short of *rabid.* They must be worried that we might decide that we could do without them altogether - what would they do if we stopped doing all the work for them and they couldn't make money out of us?

For a start we can all stop voting, we can all stop going along with their lies (ie. this is how it always is and will always be) we can start getting off our knees.

Do we want to be miserable for ever? Are we really prepared, like faithful dogs with psychotic owners, to put up with all their whims and their threats for the rest of our days?



This is the first of a short series of bulletins/leaflets which will be appearing 3 or 4 times a year. The next ***Miserable Worker*** *will concentrate on ways we can try to defend ourselves at work and how we can cause trouble for our bosses just for the sheer hell of it!!*

Miserable worker

Spring 1996
No 1

IF YOU'RE NOT MISERABLE THEN YOU MUST BE MAD!!

This bulletin has been produced by a bunch of miserable workers centred around Manchester. It is not important who we are, it is enough to know that we have been pretty miserable for a long time now! and that we have discovered that our condition is common in the working class across the entire planet. Of course we don't just mean people with "jobs" are miserable - housewives, schoolchildren, students and the unemployed are also miserable.

The main reason we reckon for everyone being so miserable is ***work***. If we're not actually at work, where we get told what to do, told off, paid too little, treated like dirt or like donkeys, then we are recovering from work, worrying about work, getting ready for work and trying our best to enjoy ourselves as much as possible in the few hours we have before we have to go back to that stinking hell-hole.

Most things we do are related to work. We don't have "children" we have "future workers", they go to school so that they can learn how to follow orders, which, as we know, is an essential trait for us workers! They may get to go to universities, but it only means that they will be able to give orders to other workers (this may seem like a better option than being on the bottom rung, but these concerned and caring people still have to take orders from people *above* them, and they have to mix with people who tend to have some serious personality defects!)

Even being unemployed is part of the whole "work" process - it's the fact the workers can easily be replaced by people on the dole that keeps us behaving like good workers and not doing "revolutionary" things like daring to ask for a pay rise which is in line with inflation. Workers constantly dream of "free time", the end of the day, the end of the week, holidays, winning the lottery, even being off sick! Being unemployed is not an option for most of us, unless we want to lose our house and probably our partner or family. Unemployment for most of us is not "free time" but dead time. If being unemployed was fun we'd all go on the dole! However, being *employed* is no fun either.....

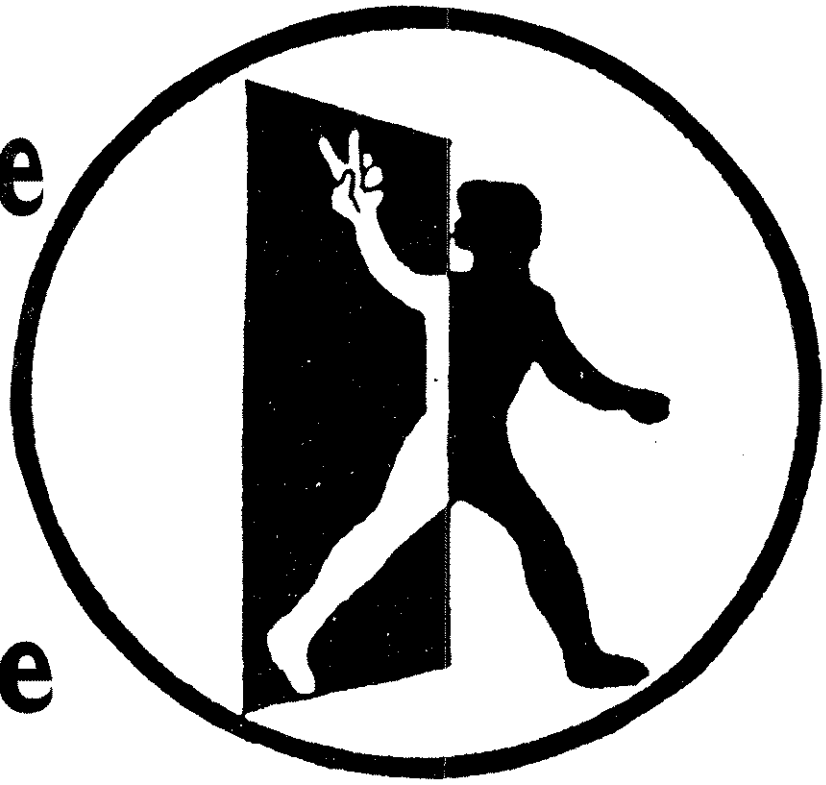
It's not the actual *doing* things that is the problem, we need to do lots of things in order to live in a decent way (eg. grow crops, distribute the things we make or harvest, make sure we have enough water and fuel, make entertainment for ourselves, etc. etc.) - no, the problem is that we are forced to work in the same way prisoners are put to work. We don't do the work we do everyday for any other reason than to keep our bosses in the lap of luxury and ourselves out of the gutter. We have to do what they tell us everyday because otherwise they will boot us out and we'll lose our wages and get put on the breadline. We are slaves to our wages, and therefore also to our bosses. In old style slavery if you refused to work for your boss you were killed, these days they twist the knife a bit more! - workers have their contracts of employment terminated and they are relegated to the margins of society. But even in unemployment you have to behave properly - that is, like a grateful and cowering dog - to continue receiving the few quid that keep you going.

Subversion

Number 19

Building Claimants' Counter Power

Fighting the Job Seekers Allowance



also in this issue ....

Merseyside Dockers ..... Detroit Newspaper Strike .....
The End of Anarchism - readers reply ....
Open Letter to Class War .....Posties Strikes

Free!

Subversion 19

What we stand for

We meet regularly for political discussion and to organise our activities. The following is a brief description of our basic political principles:

- We are against all forms of capitalism; private, state and self-managed.

- We are for communism, which is a classless society in which all goods are distributed according to needs and desires.

- We are actively opposed to all ideologies which divide the working class, such as religion, sexism and racism.

- We are against all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" movements such as the IRA.

- The working class (wage labourers, the unemployed, housewives, etc.) is the revolutionary class; only its struggle can liberate humanity from scarcity, war and economic crisis.

- Trade unions are part of the capitalist system, selling our labour power to the bosses and sabotaging our struggles. We support independent working class struggle, in all areas of life under capitalism, outside the control of the trade unions and all political parties.

- We totally oppose all capitalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. We are against participation in fronts with these organisations.

- We are against participation in parliamentary elections; we are for the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class and the establishment of organisations of working class power.

- We are against sectarianism, and support principled co-operation among revolutionaries.

- We exist to actively particpate in escalating the class war towards communism.

Introduction

In this issue we are once again publishing a number of articles by fellow revolutionaries who are not members of Subversion. These are the articles on the JSA, the Merseyside Dockers Dispute and the Detroit Newspaper Strike. The last two of these refer to 'workplace' struggles and the role of the unions. For those not familiar with our views, we want to make our position clear. We think, based on current and historic experience, that successful resistance to any major attack on our class, and the possibility of going on the offensive against capitalism is dependent on workers going outside and against trade unionist ideology (including its 'rank and file' variations).

However, we recognise that this is an intensively **practical process** which is not assisted by simply shouting anti-union slogans. It demands, from revolutionaries in particular, an understanding of the specifics and internal dynamics of particular struggles (born wherever possible from practical involvement) as well as an understanding of the general economic, social and political background to struggle.

It is in this context that we have published these contributions. It does not follow that we agree with every detailed reference or turn of phrase used by the authors, but in the interests of open and honest debate we are not in the habit of altering others' words.

We welcome all contributions from those basically sympathetic to our politics as well as letters from anyone wishing to comment on the contents of the bulletin.

Subversion cover disc offer

Due to space limitations, we had to leave out three articles from this issue. They are: a detailed piece on the JSA, a review of a pamphlet about Anton Pannekoek and an account from a prisoner in the USA on state executions. We will probably be printing these in the next issue of Subversion. In the meantime, if you can't wait to read them, send us a blank 3.5" disc and we will send it back to you packed with these article and other goodies off the Internet.

Begging time again.....

Our appeal for funds in the last issue brought in donations of over £70.00, for which we are incredibly grateful. However, our finances are still in a desperate state. As we said before, it costs around £200.00 to print an issue of Subversion and another £100.00 for mailing costs and the like. So if you feel you can spare us a few bob, then please make cheques, p.o.'s payable to **Subversion** and send them to:

Subversion, Dept 10, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW

Three Strikes and You're Out!

Building Claimants' Counter Power

THE FREE RIDE IS OVER FOR BENEFIT OFFICE BULLIES

Edinburgh Claimants and The Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh have launched a new direct action policy to resist bullying benefit office officials. It's called THREE STRIKES AND YOU'RE OUT. This is how it works.

If an official harasses you or cuts your benefit report them to Edinburgh Claimants - ring 332 7547.

Officials found guilty of harassing claimants will be given a written warning. STRIKE ONE!

A second complaint against the same individual will result in a final written warning. STRIKE TWO!

Any further complaints against that official and details of their offences, along with a massive photo of them, will be transformed into a poster to be distributed throughout Edinburgh. Offending officials can also expect an angry demo against them in their own offices. STRIKE THREE - and OUT!

If you want to resist dole harassment
- ring us if you are harassed - join us in the fight back - get together with your mates, accompany each other to interviews, go together and complain to the manager if you are harassed

This is an excerpt from Edinburgh Claimants' latest leaflet, published spring 1996. At the latest conference in Sheffield on 25 May the Groundswell network of independent claimants' groups decided to implement 3 Strikes activity Britain-wide.

Hitting Where It Hurts

Edinburgh Claimants activists delivered a 3 Strikes first warning letter on 16th May. The target was one Alistair Mathieson, restart interviewer at Torphichen St Unemployment Benefit Office. At our anti Job Seekers Allowance demo on 9 April a claimant had told us that he had just been forced onto a Jobplan workshop by Mathieson, who threatened his benefit. This despite the claimant's protests that he had no wish to waste his time on this useless activity. Mathieson's name was familiar, and a check on our previous Dole Harassment Exposed leaflets revealed that he had already committed at least 2 previous anti claimant offences. In the circumstances a first warning letter was the least we could do.

Our first task was to track Mathieson down - we didn't know what he looked like. The receptionist tried to mislead us, but after a few minutes we'd fingered him. Six of us strode purposefully through the staff section of the open plan office towards Mathieson's desk, where he was grilling another claimant. The Great Harrasser went ballistic. Jumping up, he dramatically pointed and shouted "Don't move! Stop right there.". We explained our mission. Mathieson waved his hands wildly, yelling "Call the police! Call the police!"

At this point manager Mr. Thomson turned up. This was fortunate, because we had a warning letter for him too. (Our policy is that managers must be held responsible for harassment by their staff) Thomson fumed and raged, threatening that if we returned to deliver another letter he would punish claimants by stopping signing on. We resumed our leafleting outside, well satisfied with the impact we had made.

Claimants' Counterpower

Hopefully this gives some idea what the 3 Strikes policy practically involves. In my opinion it should be seen as much more than an imaginative stunt or a publicity device. It should be seen as part of the process of building a Claimants' counterpower. An ambitious project, but a necessary one - not just around the benefits system, but in all areas of social life where capitalism and patriarchy reproduce relationships of oppression and exploitation.

The medium term aim is that any significant acts of harassment or benefit cuts at any benefit offices should be known about and practically resisted. The benefit office management and restart interviewers etc. should know that if they force someone onto a cheap labour scheme, cut their benefit or whatever, then there is a good chance that there will be direct action against them in their own offices. They will then be more reluctant to clamp down on claimants. The balance

Three Strikes and You're Out!

of power will start to change. They will be more scared of us than we are of them.

The initiative is particularly important at this time with the Job Seekers Allowance starting in October 1996. The state can pass repressive new laws attacking the working class - but whether the new law can function or not depends on what happens everyday in real life, it depends on the extent of resistance. Remember the poll tax!

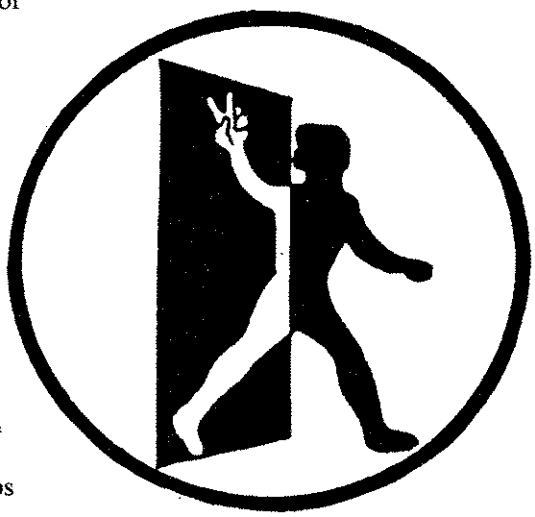
Harassing the harassers

To enable the 3 Strikes policy to have a real effect the claimants' groups will need to establish a tangible presence at particular benefit offices, through regular stalls, leafleting, flyposting, stickering, demos etc.. There needs to be an address - better still a phone number - where claimants can get in touch with info about how they've been harassed. The claimants groups will need to seek out info on harassment, asking fellow claimants who are friends and/or fellow activists in different struggles if they've been hassled. We need to spread the consciousness - we don't need to worry alone, to be humiliated, to accept being treated like shit. There is something we can do about it.

Whether the new law can function or not depends on what happens in everyday life. Remember the Poll Tax!

The 3 Strikes policy is just an early step in building claimants counter power. When we deliver a warning letter to an official guilty of harassment we should also be trying to get the decision changed in the claimant's favour. This does require some knowledge of benefit rules etc.. But we shouldn't fall into the trap of becoming welfare rights professionals. The aim should always be to collectivise the struggle.

The public delivery of warning letters, reporting acts of harassment in newssheets like Edinburgh's Dole Harassment Exposed, going in numbers to the benefit office to back up a wronged claimant, and of course the 3rd Strike and you're out flyposting and demos - these are all tactics which can help develop the consciousness and practice of claimants resistance.



A Climate of Resistance

Simultaneously with our groups operating the 3 Strikes policy we need to encourage a general climate of resistance among claimants. This already exists to a degree, as those who have been forced onto Jobplans and Restart courses know. Our groups can't begin to deal with all cases of benefit cuts and harassment, we need to spread the idea that you always go to tricky interviews with a mate, that if you are harassed or your benefit cut you go to the office with a few friends, demand to see the supervisor/manager and get it sorted out.

We definitely want claimants to report cases of harassment to the claimants groups - but we want to go further and see more and more claimants getting active in resistance, whether in the formal groups or with their friends in a more informal way. We certainly don't want to be seen as the superactivists who will zap the benefit office baddies on behalf of a mass of passive claimants.

Fighting Back Is Fun!

But despite this limitation the 3 strikes practice has a lot to recommend it. For a start - it's fun! Virtually all claimants we've talked to think it's a great idea. It's the sort of action which can enthuse people to participate. This is important if lots of people are to get involved. (Too much political activity is like a chore or a duty which only fanatics like me will get involved in.)

3 Strikes focuses on an important real point at which the state attacks claimants - the imposition of discipline and benefit cuts (e.g. compulsory schemes/crap jobs/ Child Support Act harassment/ fraud investigations) in Benefits Agency and Unemployment Benefit offices / Job Centres. 3 Strikes is a way in which collective direct action can be mounted to win some small - but real - victories for claimants. If the Groundswell decision to practise 3 Strikes Britain-wide becomes a widespread reality then 3 Strikes could play a part in making the Job seekers Allowance unworkable. Finally, it's not enough to struggle just to stop things getting worse, we need to be developing a strategy to challenge the ruling class's monopoly of power and wealth. 3 Strikes can be an important element in an ongoing process of struggle to build up claimants counter power.

Claim what's yours - the world.

E-Mail?

You can contact Subversion by sending a message to: 106014.55@compuserve.com.

An interesting source of discussion on the Internet is **AUT-OP-SY** set up "to provide a forum in which to explore the changing class composition and class struggle within the planetary work machine.."If you'd like to join the list, send the message "subscribe aut-op-sy" to: majordomo@lists.village.virginia.edu

What's The Best Way For Claimants To Fight Back?

The potential effectiveness of 3 strikes can be illustrated by comparing it with some other usual forms of claimants groups activities.

Welfare rights advice and representation - this does have the merit of dealing with real problems and hopefully gaining real improvements, but in its traditional form is disempowering to the claimant, involving reliance on an expert. Even in the more collective form of advice-giving as practised (more in the 70's than today) by Claimants Unions, it doesn't do much to collectivise open resistance or struggle.

Conventional marches, campaigns and demos - though these can sometimes have a limited publicity value, this sort of protest and campaign activity has virtually no effect on government and ruling class attacks. This kind of activity, when inevitably it fails, can lead to demoralisation and apathy, so it's often worse than useless.

Direct action occupations of benefit offices etc against attacks such as the Job Seekers Allowance - very useful as part of a wider process, which includes 3 Strike type activity, but on their own these sort of actions, though direct in one sense, are still largely symbolic in terms of any real effect. This is because (1) they are far too short lived and temporary a dislocation of business as usual to stop the introduction or functioning of measures such as the JSA, and (2) they don't usually really focus on the points at which repressive measures are actually imposed on claimants.

There are recent examples of real effective direct action claimants resistance which has actually won victories - I would hope that 3 strikes could be seen and be developed in a similar way, but hopefully with a broader counter power perspective.

The physical opposition to the special dole snooper squads in the mid 1980's. In cities like London, Glasgow and Edinburgh snoopers were confronted as they lurked outside benefit offices, photographed and forced to abandon their snoop watch. Their photos and names were reproduced on widely distributed leaflets and posters. They were followed everywhere, even to their flats and hotel rooms. Their cars suffered mysterious damage. Many benefit office workers refused to co-operate with the snoopers and some workers alerted claimants groups to the snoopers presence. The effective country-wide opposition to these snooper operations was - I would imagine - an important factor in the authorities largely stopping the use of such high profile touring fraud squads.

The widespread refusal by single mothers, and by fathers, to co-operate with the Child Support Act has gone a long way towards making this oppressive Act unworkable. In early 1995 the government announced that CSA action on 300,000 CSA pending cases of lone parents on benefits had been suspended indefinitely. No action was to be taken against 50,000 lone parents who refused to co-operate with the Child Support Agency. This seemingly largely informal practice of non-cooperation has been encouraged and helped by the groups affiliated to the Campaign Against the Child Support Act who have done invaluable work in spreading info on the tactics of non-co-operation ((how to avoid telling the CSA the father's name etc).

Written by an individual member of Edinburgh Claimants. The group can be contacted at Edinburgh Claimants / Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh, c/o Peace and Justice Centre, St Johns, Princes St., Edinburgh EH2.

Footnote

This article has not gone into the question of claimant - worker relationships, possibility of joint activity and so on. I do think it's important, Edinburgh claimants regularly leaflet benefit office workers to appeal for us to work together to fight the attacks the government is making on us both - but there just wasn't space to go into it properly here. But it must be said that it's important to explain to workers that 3 strikes is only aimed against the real nasty zealots. The latest Groundswell mailing suggests that 3 Strikes could be extended to include managers who abuse the benefit office workers, this seems like a good idea.

Groundswell, c/o Claimants Action Group, East Oxford Community Centre, Princes St., Oxford. Tel. 01865 723750. New info pack for potential and existing claimants' groups available.

Campaign Against the Child Support Act, PO Box 287, London NW6 5QU.

Info on resistance to snooper squads from Counter Information Sept.'85 and Sept. '87 (SAE & 19p stamp to CI c/o Transmission, 28 King St., Glasgow G1 5QP)

after our last issue and .....

Spain 1936 - The End of Anarchism?

.... this time .... our readers respond ....

Dear Subversion

I read your article 'The End of Anarchism' when it was first published ten years ago. I thought then that it was a good article and I thought so again when I re-read it in issue no. 18 of Subversion. The article effectively warned against seeing self-managed capitalism as a solution to our problems and showed that much of what passed for the 'Spanish Revolution' had no communist content whatsoever.

However, it is worth drawing attention to the fact that there were those in Spain at the time who were committed to the same sort of communism that Subversion stands for. Indeed, it would have been strange if that were not the case, because communist initiatives have generally been present in all the major upheavals of capitalism, all the way back to the Diggers in the English Civil War in the seventeenth century, let alone in the more advanced circumstances of the Spanish Civil War three hundred years later.

When I visited Spain in 1995, I attended a public meeting in Barcelona which was addressed by an old militant of the Civil War era, Abel Paz. Some of his reminscences were sufficiently exciting to persuade me to read his "Durruti: the People Armed" (Montreal: Black Rose, 1976) when I got back to England. In this book there are various examples given of communist initiatives, such as the armed uprising by miners around Barcelona in January 1932 which 'led to the proclamation of libertarian communism, the abolition of private property and money' (p.117). To this Paz adds the footnote: 'The destruction of the State and the abolition of classes are born from the same act: the abolition of money and property' (p.124).

Perhaps the most eye-catching of these examples is a first-hand account of one incident in which Paz participated in 1936. It is worth letting him tell the story in his own words:

'The author took part in various actions of this kind on the morning of July 20th. The one which impressed him most was the attack on a branch bank in Calle Mallorca in Barcelona. Nobody in the bank resisted the people. However a group of women, assisted by only a few men and children had seized the building and made a bonfire in the street with the furniture. Throwing this furniture into the fire the people were full of rage but also of pleasure, as if they were the judges in a cause which had been waiting to be judged for a millenium. Among other things boxes full of bank notes were thrown into the fire and absolutely no one had the idea of putting the money in their pockets. They seemed to be saying that the world of trade, the world of salaries and exploitation were really disappearing forever.' (p.217).

Sadly, they were wrong, because such initiatives were overwhelmed by the kind of developments which your article skilfully explained. Yet, in our eagerness to debunk the myths that cling to Republican Spain, let us not forget that some working men and women of the time were inspired by communism. It is important to remember the countless occasions when such initiatives have occurred (in Spain and many other parts of the world). Were we not to do so, communism would become nothing more than a disembodied ideal, a nice idea perhaps, but remote from the real struggles of this world. I know for a fact that Subversion does not see communism like that.

JC

Dear Subversion,

Reprinting an article from Wildcat that is at least ten years old crassly called the End of Anarchism, on the Spanish revolution, goes against everything I expected from people I regarded as intelligent, critical revolutionaries. So Anarchism ended with the Spanish Revolution, did it? You might as well say that Marxism ended with the First World War, with the Bolsheviks in the Russian Revolution, with the German Revolution. Sure, Anarcho-Syndicalism was proved wanting but that doesn't mean that Anarchism, in its revolutionary and Anarchist Communist form died.

Reprinting an article from Wildcat that is at least ten years old crassly called the End of Anarchism, on the Spanish revolution, goes against everything I expected from people I regarded as intelligent, critical revolutionaries.

Indeed, despite Subversion seeming to be experts on Anarchism, there seems to be a general ignorance of key Anarchist theorists and thinkers. At last year's Subversion-Anarchist Communist Federation joint day school, one long-serving Subversion comrade expressed no knowledge of the Italian Camillo Berneri, one of the key critics of CNT-FAI involvement in the Republican government.

Despite your criticisms of the rural collectives, they do remain the most advanced attempts at trying to put libertarian communism into practice, and it would be churlish to say otherwise. Of course the rural collectives were limited by the fact that war was substituted for social revolution, and for that the Spanish Anarchist movement has a lot to answer for. To cite an "anarchist puritanism" as if it were general is ill-informed, certainly in the towns

(Continued on page 7)

amongst the Anarchist working class there were no such attitudes. And anyway, if it was collectively decided not to use tobacco or even coffee - and these are isolated instances - so what?

Of course you are right to cite the condition of women which failed to change in any qualitative way. But to fail to mention the libertarian organisation of women Mujeres Libres (especially after a major article on them in Organise! 32 which you must have read) which grouped 27,000 women together is misleading. But perhaps this goes along with your expressed view that working class women should not, on any occasion, organise specifically against their particular oppressions?

The criticisms you make of how the rural collectives functioned are correct as far as they go. But you place their functioning in a void. You fail to relate it to the general situation where the bourgeois Republican government was allowed to exist, where Anarchists joined both the local Catalan government and the national government, where workers councils failed to take the place of union committees, where capitalism continued to function, and where the myth of anti-fascism was substituted for social revolution.

To mention the Anarchist participation in the Republican government without mentioning the revolutionary opposition from the likes of the Friends of Durruti, sections in the Libertarian Youth, the Iron Column and Berneri is remiss. And why is it the Spanish "Revolution" throughout? Despite everything, what happened in Spain was a Revolution, and in many ways went further than other Revolutions in the 20th Century. Because if you applied the same criteria, you would be talking about a Russian "Revolution" an Hungarian "Revolution" a German "Revolution" etc.

Subversion comrades, it's time to come clean. You talk about the end of Anarchism yet you take an active part in Northern Anarchist coordinations, both in the present and the past. And what are you, exactly? At various stages, depending on your fancy, you have described yourselves as libertarian communists, anti-left communists (confusing one that - many might think you were against left communism rather than against the left) or anti-State communists. Your criticisms of Marx remain restrained, whilst you have in the past published an article on Bakunin, critical in the extreme, which contained many distortions of his ideas.

Hoping to hear from you,
Yours for libertarian communism,
NH (member of Anarchist Communist Federation)

subversion replies

We have no major disagreements with JC's letter which acts as a necessary reminder that, contrary to the impression we may have conveyed in the original article, the working class movement in Spain in the 1930s was not entirely lacking in positive features!

The letter from NH raises some important points about the events in Spain and about Subversion's attitude towards anarchism.

In the article in Subversion 18 we acknowledged that "some anarchists are prepared to criticise the 'Government Anarchists'". We are well aware that in 1936 there were anarchist opponents of CNT-FAI participation in the Republican Government. Doubtless we would have mentioned them if that's what the article had been about. But it wasn't.

Blame it on our general ignorance of key anarchist theorists and thinkers, but what we are not aware of is any critical appraisal of the rural collectives by revolutionary anarchists, either at the time or since. What we are more accustomed to seeing is uncritical adulation of "one of the most, if not the most, extensive and profound revolutions ever seen" (see the pamphlet by Abraham Guillen, Anarchist economics: an alternative for a world in crisis, reviewed in Subversion 12). Frankly it really gets on our nerves that in the face of the evidence (our article was based mainly on books written by Sam Dolgoff, Gaston Leval and Augustin Souchy - all anarchists) most (?all) anarchists still think the collectives were marvellous. That's why we referred throughout to the Spanish 'Revolution' - as a signal of our questioning of the conventional anarchist point of view.

We admit that the title of the article was poorly chosen. It would have been more accurate to have called it, 'The End of Collectivist Anarchism', or 'The End of Syndicalist Anarchism'. For NH is quite correct to distinguish these variants of anarchism from Communist Anarchism (or libertarian communism). However there is a contradiction in what he writes.

On the one hand he says our criticisms of the rural collectives are "correct as far as they go". We remind readers that this criticism was that, in most places, the rural collectives exhibited all the hallmarks of capitalism, e.g. the existence of a wages system, money, operation of the law of value, production for the market, etc.

On the other hand, he says that "despite" these criticisms, the rural collectives "do remain the most advanced attempts at trying to put libertarian communism into practice".

We don't think you can have it both ways. Either the bulk of the rural collectives were advancing towards a form of self-managed capitalism, or they were advancing towards libertarian communism. They cannot have been doing both (unless you equate libertarian communism with self-managed capitalism).

We see no reason why revolutionary Communist Anarchists should wish to defend the Collectivist Anarchism which predominated among the rural collectives in Spain - unless out of a sentimental attachment to anything draped in a black-and-red flag. But that sort of knee-jerk reaction goes against everything we expect

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Spain - a Blast from the Past

Below are two extracts from a new book of essays by Nestor Makhno, the Ukrainian anarchist. They are taken from two article, both written in 1931 and both addressed to anarchists in Spain.

On Unity with the Bourgeoisie and the Bolsheviks.....

It is also vital that the workers get help to establish, on the spot, organs of economic and social self-direction - free soviets - as well as armed detachments for the defense of the revolutionary social measures that they will inevitably be imposing once they have come to their senses and broken all the chains of their slavish condition. Only in this way and by such broadly social action methods will the revolutionary workers be capable of striking while the iron is hot against the attempt by a new system of exploitation to drive the revolution off course.....Obviously they (the CNT and FAI) will have to steer clear here of unity with the political parties generally and with the Bolshevik-communists in particular .....

On the lack of a political programme....

What has stopped anarchists (in Spain) from putting their beliefs into practice... In the first place, the absence of a specific and detailed program has prevented them from achieving unity of action, the unity that determines the expansion of the movement during a period of revolution and its influence over everything around it.

from:The Struggle Against the State and Other Essays, by Nestor Makhno, AK Press, £7.95

Merseyside Dockers Dispute

In my last report dated 7 May 1996, I told of the meeting to set up a National Committee to co-ordinate and extend the work of the various supporters groups around the country. The actual result of the meeting allegedly to set up such a body was inconclusive. So far as I can tell no such body exists at the moment, although it remains the dockers stated intention to set one up. (We have published an extract from this report in the box on this page, ***Solidarity and the Unions****).*

Is that all?

The hesitation and indecision around this issue illustrates a debate or argument going on within the committee and the dockers leadership. I cannot say, since I am not privy to their discussions as to what their thinking is, but perhaps it is a sign of the limits of their struggle and its form of organisation that they seem unable to confront, never mind resolve their dilemma. Whilst my purpose in writing my reports is obviously to support the dockers and their struggle, I also wish to act as a catalyst for discussion of the wider issues which their struggle raises. I am also trying to develop my own ideas and understanding of their struggle.

Much comment on the dispute, and some of it directed at my reports, is on

Solidarity and the Unions

It has to be asked - what does support or solidarity mean in such circumstances ? In the very first report I ever made on this dispute in November 1995 I posed this self same question. Already the major issue behind the dispute had become clear and that was casualisation. So far as can be judged all the support groups seem to see their role principally as that of raising funds, holding meetings at which dockers or Women of the Waterfront speak. Whilst these activities are important, the issue itself has hardly even begun to be confronted. Attempts have been made to picket or occupy premises used by Drake International who recruited and trained the scabs, but most of the speakers and the dockers themselves seemed to be fixated by the idea that somehow these support groups could organise strike action. Yet even Jimmy Nolan who is the most cautious of the stewards had to admit that the dockers were in no position to ask people to put themselves 'on the line' by taking a day off work to support them. He is of course absolutely right, and in previous reports I have commented on the inability of the base of the trade union movement locally to mount any real campaign in favour of the dockers. Being the hard headed realists that they are, most trade union officials know this too. As ever there are exceptions to every statement and locally workers at AC Delco in Kirkby deserve particular mention - and I am sure there are other individual plants, factories and worksites throughout the country doing likewise - but they are conspicuous by their exceptional nature.

The belief by the Left that somehow a huge movement of solidarity is being held back by 'traitors' and 'sell-outs' amongst the trade union leadership/bureaucracy is shown to be completely superstitious and plain wrong. There were enough lay, full time and ex full time officials of various trade unions attending the conference who spoke eloquently of their efforts in the past to, for instance, argue for solidarity action at the time of the miners strike in 1984 to expose that particular piece of Leftist nonsense. Even worse however is the blatant attempt by some Leftists to force 'the leaders' [Morris, or even worse Monks of the TUC] to ORDER blacking, solidarity or whatever. I have no wish to take part in building a movement capable of that sort of crap.

Now it may be true as some speakers said that there is now a changed mood amongst workers. That the generalised insecurity brought about by increasing unemployment, short term contracts, the changed balance of power at work and so on, may indeed be bringing about an increased willingness to struggle, cannot be gainsaid. But we do ourselves no favours by relying on what perhaps may be the kind of wishful thinking that was so much in evidence on Saturday. By contrast we might do far better to try and understand what has brought about the situation we are in today, so that it can give us a clue to the growth of movements in the future. It might then be possible to do some lateral thinking and find other ways for today's working class to give expression to their struggle and themselves than the usual knee jerk strike action. And also we might do better to LISTEN to workers in struggle who are grappling in practice with TODAY'S SOCIAL REALITY.

.....the struggle continues

Firstly, let's see if we can deal with the question of the relationship of the dockers to 'their' trade union, the Transport & General Workers Union. In common with some others I have in the past adopted an attitude of hostility to the existing trade union movement - considering it as totally integrated into the system. I have seen nothing in this dispute to make me change my mind, but having such an understanding in the abstract has been of no concrete use - far more important has been the actual realisation of what its practical consequences are. In moving the resolution that the dockers had submitted to the conference, Bobby Moreton fresh back from Los Angeles, in a well argued and powerful speech, set out their thinking. He said that perhaps the fact that the dispute was unofficial and illegal, had been a source of its strength. Had Bill Morris [General Secretary of the T&G] not been afraid of 'sequestration' of union funds and property, he and the Executive might more easily have been persuaded to make the dispute official. That being the case, argued Bobby, almost certainly there would have been some rich ex- dockers on Merseyside and - NO DISPUTE AT ALL.

This is such a profound comment and a real indication of how the dockers are thinking. So, he went on, please don't amend our resolution, especially to mount a campaign to make the dispute 'official' or put 'pressure' on union leaders. Hardly had he sat down when the first speaker called, moved an amendment to do precisely that. Obviously, since he appeared to have swallowed the 'Transitional Programme' whole, we got treated to the whole argument - 'make them fight', 'expose the leadership' 'calling for this or that policy' etc. etc. Are these people deaf as well as 60 odd years out of date ? How many times do we have to have our heads bashed against the trade union door before they reckon we learn a lesson ?

The dockers have their relationship with the trade unions 'sorted'. For the moment they have the use of substantial trade union owned assets, and a substantial sum being regularly 'donated' to their 'hardship fund'. In return the union has no involvement in the dispute and that's the way the dockers want to keep it. Does it really need to be spelled out any more clearly ? Undoubtedly some officials support the dockers and may even be helping behind the scenes, but just as likely there are as many opposed to the dockers. Either way YOU CAN'T BUILD A STRATEGY ON THE UNIONS. Is that so difficult to understand or am I on a different planet to the rest of the Left ? It is simply a question of practicality for the dockers. Would that the Left could show such flexibility of thought. I hope for the moment that this disposes of this question.

question of the trade unions and what is the relationship of workers in struggle to them. I have had cause to deal with this question before, but it seems that my views are being [deliberately ?] mis-represented or misunderstood. I am not going to name the organisations involved, they certainly know who they are, but it is the question itself that needs dealing with. Communists [for that is how I would describe myself] can have their own views and disagreements. For most of the time these are quite esoteric and confined to small groupings whose existence and importance is marginal at best.

As time goes on MDHC will be able to drive up productivity levels without any or with very little collective resistance from the workforce.

However there comes a time when the question assumes a practical importance as it has done in this dispute. At this time it of no use communists going around denouncing this or that policy or strategy - this only serves to INCREASE the gulf of understanding that already unfortunately exists. Whilst I for one have made no secret of my views on this question, I have been more concerned with the PROCESS through which a section of workers comes to grips with the reality around them.

So essentially after 7 months of struggle I see the dockers position as follows:

The dockers by going directly international to dock and transport workers all over the world have managed to bring sufficient pressure onto the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, so that they cannot be ignored. They are for the moment the only section of workers who have dared to challenge the prevailing offensive of the employers and their their constant demand for increased 'flexibility'. This is why the issue at the centre of the dispute - casualisation - is the one that they constantly emphasise. And just as constantly the MDHC denies that is employing 'casual labour'.

However the reality is that the dockers remain 'locked out'; and MDHC has a replacement workforce whom they have recruited and trained, and which is working alongside approximately half the original workforce. As time goes on MDHC will be able to drive up productivity levels without any or with very little collective resistance from the workforce. This after all was what the dispute was always all about - as the recent

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Merseyside Dockers continued

(Continued from page 9)
'negotiations' have revealed.

Liverpool docks were unique in the respect that it was the only port in Britain where, after the national strike of 1989, a recognised [by the employers] collective workers organisation still existed. The view has been advanced that this dispute is the 'last stand' of a dinosaur workers movement, dominated by sectional trade union organisation . . . . and at the same time this is the beginning of a 'fight back', but that same trade union movement will 'betray' the workers. As ever, elements of a real situation have been used to bolster an ideological outlook, instead of the actual situation being looked at in all its complexity. Neither of the above views, however much they may contain elements of reality, can offer us a way forward.

I am of the opinion that the existing trade union movement in all its forms represents a barrier to any new movement and that ultimately it will have to be confronted and destroyed. But as I also have pointed out, such an abstract understanding is of no practical use in the concrete situation the dockers find themselves in.

Nobody who knows anything of the history of the dockers attempts at self organisation in Britain since the Second World War, can deny that dockers

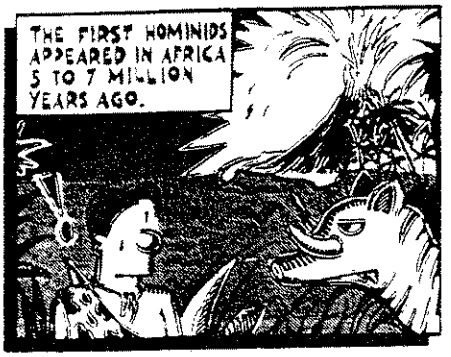
the dockers have successfully challenged the new form of work organisation casual working, short term contracts, flexibility in the form of call outs, minimum hours

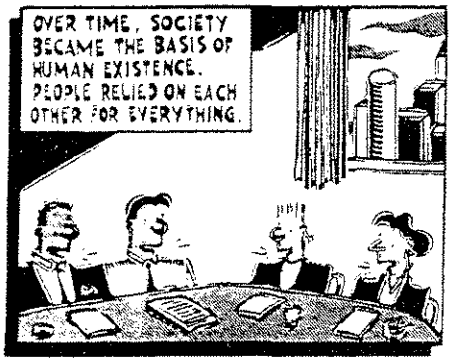
are rightly suspicious of the union that 'represents' them - the Transport and General Workers Union.

When in the 1850s unions were first able to maintain their more or less permanent existence instead of disappearing with the business cycle as had, up to then, been the case and in accordance with bourgeois economic theory, this created a problem for the authorities. How should they deal with this new organisation ? We are all aware of the history and the argument that initially at least, only skilled workers were able to keep their organisations in being, so they formed an 'aristocracy' of labour. But in the 1890s and just before the First World War, millions of workers in this country were unionised for the first time. What was the response of the State ? - It was to attempt to draw all these new organisations into the management of the system, initially to keep the war going. But later, in the form of the Turner-Mond talks of 1928, this was formalised and by the late 30s the unions were already assured of a place in the economy. Keynes and his 'New Economics' simply formalised and rationalised a process that was ALREADY UNDERWAY.

Thus the T&G was a more than willing participant in the National Dock Labour Scheme which was the result of the dockers long fight to get rid of casual working in their industry. This was an organisation set up by the State, following Keynesian attempts to 'plan' the class struggle and use it as a motor of development for capitalism. When, in common with similar schemes in Europe and North America this mechanism began to falter in the late 60s, the T&G was its biggest defender, hankering after its role in the MANAGEMENT of the labour process. This it secured with the Jones Aldington agreement on the docks. But this was never going to be a permanent solution to a problem that has its roots in the FUNDAMENTAL antagonism between Capital and Labour, which more than anything else the Keynesian system and its Labour Party backers at the time, wished to hide. So in 1989 there was a last ditch attempt to preserve collective organisation on the docks in this country - which was defeated. Nationally the unions had no answer to the combination new technology [containerisation] and the demand for 'flexibility' that dock work has always meant.

In Liverpool, some dockers organisation managed to exist in a quasi independent manner from the union. The MDHC realising that the union was no longer serving any useful role in the management of the workforce, decided that a more confrontational style was needed and could be afforded. Hence the mass sacking of almost 500 who refused to accept the new 'realities' of the labour market.





In getting this far, and maintaining their collective organisation, the dockers have successfully challenged the new form of work organisation with which we are all becoming familiar - casual working, short term contracts, flexibility in the form of call outs, minimum hours contracts and so on. But they have done it on the basis of their old organisation and with many of their existing views and conceptions unaltered. Thus we can say THAT THE DOCKERS THINKING IS WAY BEHIND THEIR PRACTICAL MOVEMENT.

So far, for instance they have not been willing to challenge the right of the T&G to 'represent' them - being content to speak the language of procedure and collective agreements - even when their employer, the MDHC, has unilaterally torn them up. Even when in the last set of negotiations the MDHC roundly abused them - calling them workshy, prone to unofficial strikes, unwilling to retrain and so on - they indignantly denied this, when in fact it is the truth. The truth is that by their actions they rejected wage labour, but they remain unwilling to recognise it - except perhaps in private and amongst people they know to be sympathetic.

Now it is no good standing on the sidelines and berating the dockers, as some have done, for not confronting the union [or even worse condemning them and their struggle out of hand as doomed from the start - à la RCP]. If you are going to be taken seriously in making this argument you must be able to show what can and should be done instead. When it comes to this practical test many of the critics are found wanting. What for instance should be the attitude when the union [as it has done] gives a substantial and regular 'donation' to the strikers hardship fund ? Or, concretely, should the dockers abandon their almost full time use of the T & G building in Islington ? Most importantly, when an official called Bowers, of the ILA on the East Coast of America, negotiates a deal with ACL who account for 40 per cent of the turnover in the Port of Liverpool, that says ACL will pull out of the Port unless the dockers demands are met - do you gratefully accept it or call him a liar and a bureaucrat on the make ? Even now, when it looks as if he will not or perhaps cannot deliver on what he said - do you denounce him, call him a traitor and a sell out ? Or do you quietly learn your lesson, send delegates out to the West Coast and attempt to do your own work ? And who knows it might even bear fruit - the West Coast and East Coast dockers organisations are talking to one another for the first time since 1934, - is this all nothing more than bureaucratic manoeuvring ?

When it is looked at in this way - you soon realise, as the dockers have, that it makes no sense to antagonise the union - IF YOU ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO OFFER A CONCRETE ALTERNATIVE THAT REALISTICALLY CHALLENGES THE UNION.

In any case, all the ritual condemnation from the ICP and others has done, is to get the dockers backs up and force the dockers back onto the ground they know- which we have already argued is changing all around them. The realisation of what the unions are and why they must be confronted and destroyed HAS TO COME FROM THE DOCKERS THEMSELVES.

Nevertheless I am bound to ask the question of a movement that can organise an international rank and file conference, send pickets 6000 miles round the world and provoke possibly a new form of struggle among previously 'unorganised' and casualised lorry drivers on the Californian Coast and act as a catalyst for struggles in Europe - How is it that it cannot find its way out of the impasse currently facing it ? How is it that it cannot generalise its struggle on an issue that affects millions of workers in this country and is directly preventing their own dispute from achieving success ?

The old form of struggle that the dockers were used to - where because of their sectional power and collective organisation, they actually had NO NEED TO PICKET - has gone. In addition the things that went with the old struggle - 'rank and file' meetings, caucuses of shop stewards, 'co-ordinating committees' on which political deals could be stitched up, etc. is paralysed by its reliance on the trade union machine. Those within the support groups in this country, who orientate themselves to this trade union base, can only pass resolutions, appeal for

money, and worst of all urge national leaderships to make the dispute official.

Now I am not going to denounce anyone in this dispute who thinks that they are proceeding along the correct lines. Obviously you proceed on the basis of what you understand [and in the case of the Left in this country that does not appear to be overmuch], but so much of what I have observed and heard in this dispute is simply a reaction to what is going on rather than the result of considered thought. This is one of the reasons why so much of the Left is quite unable to have anything meaningful to say - to the extent that the SWP is still trying to promote 'mass pickets' - and this months after the stewards have explained in some detail why this is neither possible nor desirable.

The old form of struggle that the dockers were used to - where because of their sectional power and collective organisation, they actually had NO NEED TO PICKET - has gone.

But certain realities must be faced. One of them is the daily and almost routine crossing of the dockers picket lines by lorry drivers, some of whom are known personally to the dockers.

Transport is now one of the major cycles of capital. The capitalists, in the form of management gurus and 'human relations experts' openly boast of their

(Continued on page 17)

Letter from America

Detroit Newspaper Strike

Last night (May 1st), two striking newspaper workers from Detroit came to speak at what was a modestly attended strike support meeting in Baltimore. I was involved with the ad hoc committee that put the event together.

Since this informal letter is going out to several people outside the U.S., let me review briefly some of the facts surrounding the strike, which is the most significant labor struggle going on in the States right now.

Last July, 2,000 workers organized in 6 different unions struck the two major Detroit newspapers, the Free Press and Detroit News, who far from being rivals, are instead organized in a JOA (Joint Operating Agreement) whereby both papers cooperate in various ways, the most significant being a combined Sunday edition. Both papers are owned by huge national media corporations (Knight-Ridder and Gannet, the latter publishers of "U.S.A. Today").

Besides the usual horrific concession demands (casualization, merit pay, health care cuts), which followed tremendous concessions given up during the last contract in 1989 (one striker told how his pay had been cut $10,000 a year alone as a result of this contract!), there is the added fact that Detroit is still one of the heaviest unionized cities still in the U.S. So this naked attack on the workers was provocative and a sure sign of the puffed-up confidence of the bosses in the current climate. Furthermore, the newspaper management has imported 2,000 goons from the Vance Security firm to police the strike - a return to the era of the Pinkertons of a century ago and a brutal sign of how labor relations are steadily peddling backwards in the U.S.

Last summer through early fall, there were several mass rallies and picket lines which attempted to shut down production involving thousands of Detroit workers. The police attacked and beat dozens of workers and on at least one occasion, the Sunday papers had to be airlifted by helicopters out of the printing plant. Rocks and bottles were thrown at the police, who fired tear gas and arrested many. In an attempt to get the paper out, 6 trucks suddenly barrelled through a gate just narrowly avoiding running over several strikers. During one such rally, a newspaper truck was mysteriously turned on its side and set on fire while the T.V. cameras rolled - this arson was performed by . . .the Vance Security firm as part of a disinformation campaign to create an impression that the strikers were violent. The District Attorney's office is investigating Vance for its role in this arson.

The newspapers went to court and rapidly got an injunction limiting the number of pickets which, enforced by the union apparatus, immediately ended the rallies. As one striker pointed out, the courts work real fast when it comes to issuing injunctions and awfully slow on processing National Labor Relations Board complaints (the NLRB is a government agency set up to process and arbitrate labor disputes, including unfair work practices by employers). And this is a fact well known to management, who bragged how they would appeal any unfavorable NLRB decisions "until every striker was dead."

Since then, the strike has been at a standstill. The unions have called for a boycott of the papers which has been remarkably successful - circulation has plummeted by tens of thousands, major advertisers have pulled ads and financially it is clear the papers are losing

The End of Anarchism?

(Continued from page 7)

from people we regard as intelligent, critical revolutionaries.

On the issue of working class women "organising specifically against their particular oppressions": we want working class women (and men) to join revolutionary organisations. The article in Organise! 32 describes how Mujeres Libres was formed because of the sexism of men in the CNT-FAI. If the attitudes and behaviour of some members of an organisation prevent other members from playing as full a part as possible in the organisation, then in our opinion that organisation is not a revolutionary one.

At vital moments in the past, the line dividing revolutionaries from the rest has always cut straight through both Anarchism and Marxism, leaving some Anarchists and Marxists on the side of capitalism, and some on the side of the revolution. Just as Spain marked 'The End' of a particular form of anarchism, you could argue that the First World War and the 'revolutions' which followed it did indeed mark 'The End' of a particular form of Marxism, in the sense that the anti-working class nature of vast parts of the old labour movement was exposed for all to see.

Genuine revolutionaries have only ever been minority currents within most of what passes for Marxism and Anarchism. Genuine revolutionaries have usually found inspiration in bits of both. But we need to reject more than we accept of both traditions. We have said all this on several previous occasions, e.g. in Subversion 8, 14 and 15 and at various meetings including those of the Northern Anarchist Network.

Report from Baltimore

money hand over fist. But since they are owned by large national companies who can afford to plough millions of dollars into operating at a loss, the boycott, while substantial, has not had the effect it could have.

Strikers themselves have started their own alternative Sunday paper as a way of overcoming the almost total media black-out and this weekly paper now has a circulation of several hundred thousand in the Detroit area. (One amusing anecdote about the advertising boycott: when strikers went to 7-11 requesting they not carry the papers, 7-11 quickly pulled the papers city-wide without an argument; an act which puzzled the strikers until several months later when they were speaking in NYC they discovered that during a newspaper strike there in 1987 (?), several 7-11's had mysteriously had their plate glass windows trashed and a few even set on fire. A sure sign that the bosses exchange such information!).

The unions also printed up bright red and white lawn signs saying "No Detroit News and Free Press Wanted Here" which are up at over 100,000 people's yards. But it is indicative of the viciousness of the newspaper owners that they have issued an informal "off the record" bounty of $10 per sign for each one brought in. So the signs are snatched mysteriously at night (probably by the Vance goons) often with tire tracks on the lawn showing that it has been a hit and run affair. As proof, one union member attached a secret alarm to his lawn sign and when it was snatched, the alarm went off and he was able to confront the thief (a scab newspaper employee) who had half-a-dozen other stolen signs in the back of his truck!

Also, quite mysteriously, it seems that there is barely a functioning newspaper vending box in the Detroit area now - for some odd reason! And in the past, people who went ahead and tried to purchase scab papers anyway from these vending boxes have instead found fresh roadkill in the boxes and nary a paper! How awful!

The national AFL-CIO has claimed that winning the Detroit strike is a priority. Despite this rhetorical gesture, it is clear that they have not demonstrated this. So although they provided start-up money for the striker's own newspaper and have sent several key staff to Detroit, what the AFL considers as a priority is getting the vote out for Clinton in November - a commitment where they have put their money where their mouth is, to the tune of 36 million dollars. There is talk now of a National March in Detroit sometime in July (what one striker confusingly called a "National Strike Day"). There are still tremendous illusions or hopes among the strikers about the AFL and new Sweeney leadership still although any criticisms may have been muted out of diplomacy.

Clearly the experience of the strike has had a radicalizing effect. One of the speakers, a striking Teamster, told how he lives in Sterling Heights (a white suburb of Detroit, probably an area where white workers moved to 'escape' the inner city) and the local police were on the board of his softball team for local children. Since Sterling Heights was the location of the main printing plant for the Detroit papers, it was there that some of the most militant mass picketing took place last summer. Now he has had to fight these very same cops in the streets when they waded into the picket lines in Darth Vader type leather suits and helmets beating people right and left. This was not supposed to happen in "The American Dream". This was something that was supposed to happen in the black ghetto but not to white workers in the suburbs who 'played by the rules'.

But as the Detroit newspaper strike amply demonstrates, today there are no such safe areas left any more in the United States. Everything is up for grabs and no one is safe or protected from the current onslaught on wages and working conditions.

A final note about working to build this solidarity meeting: some attempt was made to interest the local unions in coming out or doing something. And it is indicative of both the erosion of basic solidarity and the absolute inertia of the traditional union apparatus (including the lefties and 'progressives' buried deep inside these bureaucratic structures) that there was practically no response whatsoever. A sure sign of the exhaustion of the traditional labor movement . . .

CP

Everything is up for grabs and no one is safe or protected from the current onslaught on wages and working conditions.

Back Issues

We still have copies of issues 14, 15, 16 and 18 available.

If you'd like to receive one, then just send 25p each for postage.

Subversion 17 is available as text files on disc only. To receive a copy, send either a blank disc and 25p, or 50p and no disc. Please state whether you require PC or Mac format.

Also available:

The Best of Subversion, a selection of articles from issues 1 - 11, **price 75p including postage.**

discussion

Democracy and Rights

Subversion note: Both these letters have been shortened. The second one appeared in the Discussion Bulletin (Nov-Dec 1995. Address - P.O. Box 1564 Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501) and has been shortened to just the part dealing with Subversion.

The two letters are being treated together for the purposes of this reply.

Dear Subversion,

Thanks for sending me the 4 issues of your magazine. My friends and I here in Los Angeles have enjoyed and been inspired by your refreshing approach to political issues. I was very interested in your discussion concerning animal "rights" and the whole notion of "rights" in general. In your "Bambi Lib!" article in Subversion 16 you equate the concept of Rights with supersititious beliefs such as God or the Tooth Fairy. Of course the notion of Human Rights is merely an abstraction, as are the concepts of liberty, justice or freedom, and will remain such unless they are brought down to earth. As you say, people must realize that "rights" are never handed to them, but must be fought for. You seem to object to the use of the word "Rights" and substitute the works "freedoms" or "gain". How is this, in and of itself, any advance over the use of the idea of rights, especially given the powerful (I think) symbolic effect already establisthed within the concept of Human Rights? What I'm asking is do you feel there is really an adequate word/phrase to substitute for the concept of "Rights"? My comrades and I haven't been able as yet to come up with one.

S. (Los Angeles Workers' Voice)

The letter below is a response to "The Revolutionary Alternative to Left-Wing Politics" - Subversion 16.

Subversion - an excellent critique of the left, that vanguard of bureaucratization. However your interpretation of democracy and the reasons for leftism's development are crude. It is as though E.P. Thomspson and Christopher Hill had never existed. You need to do a real in depth study of social history rather than reduce a highly complex development down to rhetoric about con jobs. In other words, you still remain in the left, you haven't broken with that reductionist, conspiratorial, and hyperbolic frame of mind that characterises leftism. And please do you homework before you start telling us what to believe.

Blaming working people for accepting "bourgeois democracy" also smacks of leftist elitism. The fact is, deomocracy originally meant direct democracy and this was how the working population saw it and was what they strived for. The fact that they were defeated and elite democracy replaced the original concept is not really their fault. Condemning the notion of "the people" is also anachronistic. Modern classes were not fully formed in 1789. There was no real industrial bourgeoisie and the few manufactureres in their tiny factories were originally master craftsmen. Politically, on one side, stood the financial or mercantilist bourgeoisie tied to the ancien regime and on the other, the artisans, peasants, professionals and nascent industrialists, i.e., the people. Hence, the concept was not fraudulent, but was an accurate description of reality. So too with populist movements in the US. "People" meant the farmers, artisans and industrial workers who faced a common enemy in the railroad barons and banking interests.

Larry Gambone (U.S.A.)

subversion replies

The first letter asks if a better word than "rights" exists. The point made by our original article ("Horse sense" - Sub. 16) is not just about a choice of words: the concept itself gives a quite false view of reality. "Rights" (human or otherwise) implies a "legal" relationship which, whether or not it exists in actual laws enforced by governments, nontheless exists in some "virtual reality" world outside of real social relationships. The fact that it doesn't merely express a desired end but purports to be an already existing reality (i.e. we are said to "have" rights whether or not real laws conform with the fact) shows the imaginary, indeed "paranormal" nature of these "rights".

We don't believe such a distorted view can be useful to the working class in its struggle for its interests. Far better to simply say: "the reality of our present existence is thus and so, but our interests are such, such and such - let's fight for them!"

MODERN MORALITY
I MADE THESE SNEAKERS.
I'LL PAY YOU 13¢ FOR THEM.
HOW MUCH WILL YOU PAY ME FOR THESE SNEAKERS?
92¢ A PAIR.
CHECK OUT THESE GREAT SNEAKERS!
HOW ABOUT $7 A PAIR?
ACM DISTRIBUTION INC.
THESE SNEAKERS ARE SIMPLY OUTSTANDING! BUY THEM NOW!
OKAY, OKAY, I'LL PAY $18.
BUYER
THESE COOL SNEAKERS ARE ON SALE FOR ONLY $89!
I CAN'T AFFORD THAT... I DON'T HAVE A JOB!
LAZY SCUM LIKE HIM ARE RUINING AMERICA!
TED RALL

As to the second letter, we reject its argument on the following counts: "Elitism" - this implies a separation between us as revolutionaries and the working class, something we have never accepted. We are simply a part of the class. If we say workers have been duped in various ways, this means us too - were any of us born with revolutionary consciousness? To us it's a patent fact that working class people have been conned time after time after time by all manner of ruling class factions, in the past as in the present day, in every country in the world. It's absurd to say that anyone who points this out is being elitist.

As to the points about class formation: it's true that the transformation of the world in the image of capitalism has gone a long way since bourgeois democracy came into the world, but it's also continuing today, and that doesn't mean capitalist class differences don't yet exist! Even at the time of the French Revolution there was enough of a difference between Bourgeois and Proletarian for the revolutionary government to pass a law banning workers' associations because they "divided the people" or somesuch phrase. That means that "democracy" (whether "direct" or not) was fraudulent because it ignored class division and class power. And what class did the "financial and mercantilist bourgeoisie" belong to? They were bourgeois and anti-working class - not because they were "tied to the ancien regime" but because of their own class nature. And if the nascent industrialists were not yet so obviously inimical to the developing working class, so what? Their class nature meant their ultimate alignment with the rest of the bourgeoisie was certain.

This is even more obvious in the case of the 19th century U.S. - "Railroad barons and banking interests" are clearly part of the capitalist class, which means their economic (and thus social and political) power consists of their dispossession and exploitation of the working class. Recognition of this class antagonism is crucial for any resistance, and this can only be undermined by wooly concepts like "the people".

If we compare all this with the Russian Revolution and subsequent developments, there are interesting parallels. The reactionary nature of Bolshevik ideology was certainly not obvious to the working class and peasantry in Russia at the time of the Revolution. But we have no hesitation in saying that it was nontheless reactionary.

Cde Gambone's method of argument is actually quite reminiscent of the Trotskyist approach: The comment about elite democracy winning out in the end and its implication that this is where the whole problem stems from (i.e. that there was nothing wrong with the original form of bourgeois democracy) recalls the well-known Trot idea that everything wrong with the Soviet Union stemmed from Stalin's takeover and that the original ideas of Leninism had nothing to do with this!

The final, point here, and one that we particularly stress, is that our vantage point at the end of a whole period of history that has followed these events gives us the benefit of hindsight (which of course is no benefit unless we use it). What might have been understandable mistakes (or it might be better to describe them as inevitable historic limitations or compromises)from people living at the time of say, the French Revolution or the Russian Revolution, are certainly NOT understandable when repeated TODAY. There is an echo of this failure to recognise the issue of class lying behind the facade of "democracy" to be found among people who often appear in the pages of the Discussion Bulletin. And this is the understanding of class struggle as the motor of historical change, rather than the strategy of just "spreading the word" and gradually recruiting more people - what can be summarised as "Winning the democratic argument".

The S.P.G.B and assorted syndicalists among others, for all that they proclaim class as the fundamental division in society, do not in our view base their strategy for revolution upon an escalation of real social struggle (without which there will be no mass change in consciousness). Arguments of socialists must be an integral part of such struggle, but are only a part of the whole - they will never amount to much in a social vacuum.

The point we're making is that abstract ideas of "democracy" can be just as big a problem today as they ever were.

Open Letter to Class War

The letter below was given to Class War after issue 69 appeared, in the expectation that they would print it in their paper. They later told us verbally that it was "not the type of thing they put in their paper" or somesuch phrase. This was disappointing, not to say rather pathetic, but we are printing it ourselves instead in the hope that it still might provoke useful debate.

Dear Comrades,

SUBVERSION has always had good relations with Class War, particularly Manchester Class War with whom we have had joint public meetings on occasion. We see the CW members we know as fellow working-class revolutionaries. However, when we read your paper we notice that from time to time the most appalling reactionary shite appears in it.

We think it's about time we took you up on some of these things, and hopefully we can get a useful debate going.

The item that prompted us to write this letter was the review of "The Battle of Algiers" in CW 69, in which you indicate support (to some degree at least) for the FLN (National Liberation Front).

Class War has a body of opinion within it that is sympathetic to such "oppositional capitalist" movements, in particular the Irish Republicans. It goes without saying that the IRA are just another nasty bunch of "alternative rulers"

This organisation, after it came to power in Algeria, created a brutal capitalist regime in no way better than the French colonial one it replaced. Three decades later the experience of living under it has driven huge numbers of people into the arms of Islamic Fascism in their desperation for an alternative (which in turn will be just as bad, of course).

Some might object that the review said the FLN were "cool" rather than using the words "we support them". But many people think Nazi uniforms were "cool". You wouldn't print that, would you? Saying something is "cool" is just a somewhat mealy-mouthed way of saying you support them.

You also say that the FLN "didn't have all the answers". On the contrary, we think they DID have all the answers - the answers to how to crush the working class in the interest of capitalism! That was their aim all along.

The FLN are in their class nature the same as every other "national liberation movement", that is, bourgeois. All such movements oppose the existing rulers merely in order to step into their shoes. Class War has a body of opinion within it that is sympathetic to such "oppositional capitalist" movements, in particular the Irish Republicans. It goes without saying (given what we've just said above) that we think the IRA are a nasty bunch of "alternative rulers" just like all other "national liberationists" round the world and that once in power they would create a brutal capitalist state the same as every other one. That is the nature of capitalism.

Some people say that they are "fighting the British State" or that "the Government opposes/fears them" as a reason to support them.

But exactly that argument was used during the Cold War by the supporters of the U.S.S.R. and other State Capitalist regimes as a reason for us to support them (or "defend" them, as the Trots would say).

But genuine revolutionaries don't support something just because this or that government or faction is in conflict with them. It's what they offer the working-class that's important. All capitalist factions (no matter how much they fight each other) have one thing in common: They offer only slavery, misery and war to our class. These issues are vital for revolutionaries - they can't be ignored for the sake of "unity" or whatever. Supporting independent action by the working-class for its own, independent class interest is a universe away from going around supporting counter-revolutionary bastards. Or even calling them "cool"

Yours in comradeship,

SUBVERSION

□

Want to meet Subversion?

We occasionally have public meetings inthe Manchester area. For details, write to our address: Subversion, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW.

Members of Subversion are active in both the Manchester Class Struggle Group and the Manchester Anti-JSA Group. The Anti-JSA Ggroup meets every fortnight. in the Vine pub, Kennedy Street, off Fountain St, near Manchester Town Hall. Meetings are alternate Wednesdays,e.g. 17th July, 31st July, 14th August, 28th August and so on. For more information, write to Dept 99, 1 Newton St, Manchester M1 1HW.

If you like Subversion, then why not try:

Organise!, publication of the ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX

Aufheben, c/o Prior House, Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY

Collective Action Notes, POBox 22962, Baltimore, MD21203,USA

Trouble at Royal Mail

(Continued from page 18)

action has to be taken within 28 days or another ballot has to be taken. Also there has to be 7 days notice of the commencement of industrial action. So, in order for further industrial action to be legal at least one day has to be called within the 28 day period.

It is likely that Royal Mail will try to introduce teamworking anyway, which will result in unofficial walkouts. Ever mindful of their huge salaries and the massive funds of the union our union bosses will try to make sure their arses are covered as best as possible in the event of any undisciplined action taken by us lowly pawns.

At the time of writing this your correspondent is pretty much in the dark about what is going on in the talks (read: "stitch-up") between our glorious union leaders and their chums at Royal Mail headquarters, *and* what has been happening across the country amongst posties (this is partly due to the reticence of all you radical types out there - you know who you are! - who refuse to take a wage of £4.27 an hour and infiltrate the ranks of the discontented staff at Royal Mail).

I can only give you a bit of rumour and innuendo from Scotland at this stage: It seems that Royal Mail want to avenge themselves on the successful wildcat (unofficial) strikers of late last year by provoking them into unofficial action that will not be supported by the Union. This kind of strategy could serve the current Union big wigs (in fact, Alan Johnson does seem to have all his own hair, although his face does put a lot of people in mind of a bull-dog chewing a wasp) in their efforts to thwart the rise of the left in the union hierarchy and also the waywardness of Scottish posties in general. The union has warned repeatedly that any unofficial action will be come down on very hard by the union and that any offices who take unofficial action or any reps. that support it will find themselves extremely isolated. Union headquarters are constantly engaged in a test of strength with both actual workers (in the cities) and the challengers to the throne who exploit workers' disgruntledness (consciously or unconsciously) in their efforts to take over the union. [The exact same sentence above would apply if the Union bosses were currently "left wing" rather than, as they are at present, "right wing".]

Anyway, we promise more detail in the next issue, until then, as ever:
***SUBVERSION* says:**

ALL OUT UNTIL WE DESTROY THE ENTIRE MONEY SYSTEM!!
[see the last SUBVERSION for further background to the current troubles]

Dockers continued

(Continued from page 11)

'Just in Time' production schedules, and we marvel at how easily goods are shipped round the world, overcoming barriers of language and culture. But this success also shows a weakness. Docks without inland communications, and principally road communications, are simply useless pieces of real estate. As the action of the truck drivers in the greater Los Angeles area has shown, disrupting this flow is one of the main weapons workers have. Many of those engaged in the anti-roads struggle have demonstrated how easily road transport communications are disrupted, and this point has not been lost on some dockers.

If the docks dispute is to move forward at all, this is the major question that has to be addressed. A way has to be found of overcoming the present atomised and fractured nature of road transport. We have to realise that the industry is organised in the way it is as a RESPONSE to the class struggle that took place within it. It does not take a genius to realise that one of the driving forces behind the 'privatisation' of the railways lies in the attempt to get round a very strong, sectionally organised group of workers, who have demonstrated their power and willingness to use their sectional strength.

To do all this a movement will have to break out of its sectional limitations, will have to overcome many of its ingrained habits and attitudes. I have tried to be as objective as I can in assessing how far and how much the dockers have done. Perhaps now after 7 months, we must realise that there is only so far such a movement can go. Perhaps given the point from where we started, much has already been ,but also given the point from where we started, perhaps this is as far as this movement can go?

DG May 1996

STOP PRESS

As a result of picketing by dockers upwards of 100 scabs have been sacked or are facing the chop, these are in two smaller companies 50% owned by MDHC.
Dockers in Vancouver have stopped loading grain ships to Liverpool.
Drake International have been forced by picketing to move their offices from the centre of London to Wembley.

Subversion Pamphlets

Ireland - Nationalism and Imperialism, the myths exploded.
Labouring in Vain, why Labour never was a socialist party.
Both 50p inc. postage.

Manchester Bombing

Lack of space prevents us from going into this attack on working class people by the IRA. Suffice it to say that it reveals a typical level of callous disregard for the lives of working class people in Manchester, typical of those who seek to replace one ruling class by themselves. We have written about them before. If you want to know our more detailed views, write and we'll send you photocopies of the relevant artciles and a copy of our pamphlet, advertised on this page.

Trouble At Royal Mail

You may have noticed that those troublesome, layabout, good-for-nothing postal workers have recently been taking the odd day off. The series of ("successful") one-day strikes {two so far, and no more in the pipeline as this is written} are mainly over Royal Mail's burning desire to introduce **"teamworking"** (which the bosses now refer to as a **"new way of working"**) and a system of **"one hundred per cent continuous improvement"**.

They also want us, in return for an hour and a half reduction in hours over a week, to be available to work an extra fifteen minutes at the end of each duty for nothing, i.e. one and a half hours a week! They also want to give us **"job security until the year 2000"**, which is a massive three and a half years! And since only a small percentage of Royal Mail employees are on short-term contracts this can only mean that around the turn of this miserable century they want to put us all on contracts. In return for this "new way of working" they say they will increase basic pay but these words come from the rabid dogs who have been busy for ages trying to reduce the total wage bill - even on their own figures 20% will be worse off!

"Teamworking" means that delivery personnel will have to work in small teams, arranging our own holidays and covering each others duties when anyone is on holiday or sick. It is not certain that we will be paid overtime for covering each others duties. Allied to this is the concept of **"one hundred per cent continuous improvement"** which means that we have to clear the office completely of mail everyday and continuously improve our performance (productivity has risen **60%** over the last few years, but with **no** increase in staff). If we fail at any point then we will lose the bonus that Royal Mail has decided will be the carrot that ensures we are obedient and fast-working donkeys. Teamworking will turn us against each other because we will learn to rely on their bonus (a paltry **maximum** of £130 per month) and if anyone fails then they will be to blame for the whole office losing its bonus. It is also possible that overtime money (if there is any!) for covering sick or holiday absences will come out of the bonus! (The practice of teamworking in the US postal service, by-the-way, has been abandoned due to its failure to work, but they have had a different system to the one in Britain for a very long time now.)

THIS EXPLAINS OUR LEAN PRODUCTION TEAM CONCEPT.
EACH WORKSTATION HAS ITS OWN COLOR CODED HATS.
GREAT! WHEN DO I MEET MY OTHER TEAM MEMBERS ?
WHAT OTHER TEAM MEMBERS.?

"Teamworking" means that delivery personnel will have to work in small teams, arranging our own holidays and covering each others duties when anyone is on holiday or sick.

The introduction of these plans by Royal Mail will probably mean that Postman Pat, who had the cushiest round in the entire country, will resort to taking an overdose of paracetamols.

Before the result of the strike ballot Royal Mail managers had been secretly instructed to introduce teamworking **immediately** if the result had been no to industrial action. And they are the ones who go on and on and on about negotiations and more importantly, that they want our views and our participation. Do you think maybe they are just a bunch of slimy, untrustworthy cheats?

Finally, a little bit about the tight red tape of union law these days (but don't feel sorry for the union bosses!!). All industrial action, in order to be legal, has to be the result of a ballot. Once the ballot results are in then industrial

(Continued on page 17)

Subversion

Number 20

STUFF THE JOB SEEKERS ALLOWANCE

also in this issue ....

Liverpool Dockers

Kurdish Anarchists

Texas State Death Factory

Democracy and Ballots

Posties' strike

Australian Parliament Invaded

Free! [or donation]

Subversion 20

What we stand for

We meet regularly for political discussion and to organise our activities. The following is a brief description of our basic political principles:

- We are against all forms of capitalism; private, state and self-managed.

- We are for communism, which is a classless society in which all goods are distributed according to needs and desires.

- We are actively opposed to all ideologies which divide the working class, such as religion, sexism and racism.

- We are against all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" movements such as the IRA.

- The working class (wage labourers, the unemployed, housewives, etc.) is the revolutionary class; only its struggle can liberate humanity from scarcity, war and economic crisis.

- Trade unions are part of the capitalist system, selling our labour power to the bosses and sabotaging our struggles. We support independent working class struggle, in all areas of life under capitalism, outside the control of the trade unions and all political parties.

- We totally oppose all capitalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. We are against participation in fronts with these organisations.

- We are against participation in parliamentary elections; we are for the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class and the establishment of organisations of working class power.

- We are against sectarianism, and support principled co-operation among revolutionaries.

- We exist to actively particpate in escalating the class war towards communism.

Introduction

Welcome to issue 20 of Subversion.

As we go to press (Oct 1996), the Job Seekers Allowance has just come into force across the country. Both Conservative and Labour parties are planning further attacks on unemployed workers. Subversion members are active in the fight against the JSA. The articles in this issue reflect the debate going on within this movement.

Once again we are printing a number of articles from people who are not members of Subversion. These are the articles on the Dockers Dispute, the JSA and the process of capital punishment in Texas. We welcome articles for publication. They increase the level of discussion in Subversion, which leads to a more interesting and informative publication. If you'd like to write something for us, why not drop us a line and let us know what you've got in mind? If you don't want to write an article, but have something to say, then send us a letter for publication.

Back issues

We have a few copies of Subversion 17 and 19 left. There are plenty of numbers 16 and 18. We also have some of earlier editions. Alternatively, we can provide some articles and our pamphlets on Ireland and Labour on computer disc. (PC format preferrably, though we can cope with Macs). For any back issues, just send an SAE to our address.

The Best Of Subversion

This pamphlet comprises a selection of articles from the first 11 issues of Subversion. It costs £1.00 inc p&p.

Send us your money!

Once again we are appealing for donations. Many thanks to those who sent us funds last time. This issue has cost around £250 to print (we do 1000 copies). Postage will be in the order of £70.00. So the odd bluey or two would be very greatfully received.

your questions answered

Q. Can I join Subversion?
A. We'll tell you in issue 21.

Subversion, Dept 10, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW

Dockers Lockout

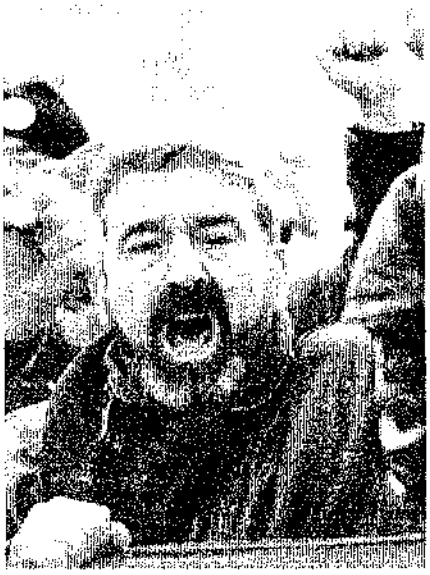


Photo courtesy of LabourNet

Subversive Note: Both this and the next article, **Reclaim the Future**, were written by a communist in Liverpool who has been active supporting the Dockers Struggle. This is taken from the latest in his series of reports on the dispute.

As I write [early September] we are approaching the first anniversary of the dispute which was sparked off by the dockers refusal to cross the picket line mounted by dismissed dockers employed by an 'independent' stevedoring firm called Torside. In Britain in the 1990s such sympathy or in the words of the legislation, 'secondary action', is illegal.

The policy of the dockers remains one of insisting on the full reinstatement of all dockers dismissed on the terms and conditions they 'enjoyed' prior to the dispute. Now I was going to begin this report/commentary on a note of criticism of the dockers. By concentrating on reinstatement, the dockers I thought, were allowing what I conceived to be the major question of casualisation [what Jimmy Nolan, Chair ofthe Dispute Committee confusingly calls 'employment contracts'] to be lost from view.

But of course this is looking at events at the surface and missing what is going on underneath. It is, in my opinion the first duty of communists, anarchists or whatever we call ourselves, to look beyond the surface of events and try and penetrate what is really going on. That is, it is first of all our job to try and understand. So here is my attempt.

The policy of total re-instatement which is endorsed every Friday at the mass meeting of dockers and their supporters is actually what used to be called by the American SDS student movement in the 70s a 'non negotiable demand'. That is, given the changes in the economy since the [Keynesian inspired] National Dock Labour Scheme was abolished in 1989, there is NO WAY the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company can allow a return to the previous situation. In any case a whole new scab labour force has been recruited, trained and is even now driving up productivity levels to unheard of heights. So, for instance when ACL came back to the port, the 80 dockers who left 'voluntarily' were not replaced. The fact that there is now a regular turnover of scab labour which cannot cope with the new casualised way of working and the much reduced pay, does not bother MDHC. They have a core layer of skilled workers who are prepared to take on and train a succession of casualised and atomised workers to do the bulk of the basic work in the port. The fact also, that it has been become more dangerous to work in the Port of Liverpool does not bother them either.

Those of you who have been following my reports will know that we have argued that this is a generalised and long term trend in all workplaces - and it spells the end of the post war Keynesian based consensus which we had all become used to. Space prevents me from going into this in any more detail here, but we are working on a much longer analysis in which we hope to demonstrate this clearly. All this being the case, the dockers official policy is, I have come to realise way behind their real thinking and practice. The only 'negotiations' going on are those sponsored by Bill Morris and the T & G national and local officials, ably abetted by the ITF, who have made it quite plain that a 'compromise' must be found over the heads of the dockers. And obviously not in the interests of the dockers but because Morris and Co have been visibly shaken by the dockers international campaign and the open discussion on 5 continents of the idea of forming a new international dockers union.

Morris came to Liverpool and attempted to lay down the law about 'unofficial action' and going through official channels and just showed how out of touch he is. Unfortunately, although many dockers would willingly have told him where to go - they are held back by the fact that they are still to a major extent financially dependent on the union, and could find themselves slung out of the T & G building which they have made their own almost, for the past 11 months. And more importantly because they are at the end of the day only some 500 and as yet neither they, nor us have seen any 'echo', or sufficient evidence from other groups of workers similarly affected, in conflict with 'their' unions.

....struggle is what the dockers have been engaged in. And struggle, as we know changes everything. Wherever dockers have gone to speak in this country they have faced concretely the question of casualisation, they have urged workers to struggle...

I said at the beginning that the dockers had allowed the question of casualisation to slip from the forefront of their campaign, but actually that is not quite accurate. Because the campaign is around a 'non negotiable demand' for re-instatement, the dockers are not sitting around waiting for the MDHC to cave in - because they now understand that they will not. Mike Carden on the dispute committee posed the question at the time when ACL came back to the port and when there was some understandable gloom about the future of the dispute - where can we go ? There is no offer 'on the table', all we have is struggle.

And struggle is what the dockers have been engaged in. And struggle, as we know changes everything. Wherever dockers have gone to speak in this country they have faced concretely the question of casualisation, they have urged workers to struggle, to support them financially but also to learn how they have done things for themselves and to have the confidence to do things likewise. In the process this group of workers has been utterly transformed. What was

(Continued on page 4)

Reclaiming the Future

The weekend of 28/29/30th September saw Reclaim the Streets activists in Liverpool to support the sacked dockers. We view this as a very significant development. The following is one observers report of events as he saw them.

Just a short note to describe the weekend of 28/29 September. I am only going to describe what I personally saw. Any reflection on the events will have to wait until I can check my impressions with others.

Reclaiming Liverpool

The 'eco-warriors' who came together under the banner of 'Reclaim the Streets' to support the dockers struggle brought with them new ideas, new ways of doing things and an almost naive curiousity about the dispute. On the Saturday there was a demonstration through the city centre which was odd mixture of the old and new.

New was the colour, the music and the feeling of excitement which many of these people brought to what has been in the past a rather tired, social democratic trudge through the streets. When we got near MacDonalds the state showed that it took the new elements seriously when the OSD in full body armour and holstered pistols, blocked off the road . . . just in case. Then when we got to the Pier Head, traditional meeting place for the struggles of the 70s, what a transformation ! Instead of the cobbles and Liverpool's version of the Tatlin tower [a monument to an earlier attempt at trade union internationalism, that of Ford shop stewards to co-ordinate a struggle internationally], there was a manicured lawn and a podium. Our history transformed into a tourist trap. The Tatlin tower, 'temporarily removed' during renovations has no doubt been cut up so as no longer to embarras the Council or the MDC which now 'owns' the Pier Head. Another piece of our history turned against us - it was almost too much to bear. .

Along come the filth

...In the evening, whilst we were just having a quiet drink, one of the WoW burst in to say that the OSD had surrounded the Custom House on the Dock Road. This is one of those 2 storey government buildings, now abandoned by the state, which the eco-warriors had squatted since the previous Wednesday. Social space that any movement needs and which the dockers have, precariously, in the form of their use of the T & G building in Liverpool.

Suddenly, a crisis. All the arrangements for co-ordination that the dockers and eco-warriors had made - mobile phone telephone numbers for just such an emergency, were not answering. Does the state know when they are switched off ? Were the OSD just waiting for people's guard to be lowered ? What sort of mobilisation did they expect at 9-30 on a Saturday night ?

We rushed down to the Custom House - Jimmy Nolan wanting us to impress on the eco-warriors the need to avoid a futile confrontation, would they be in the same frame of mind ? How do they handle situations like this ? What seriously were the 20 or so us who went supposed to do ? I called at a garage to buy spare batteries for my flash on the camera - but if the OSD were serious, on past experience you don't get to keep your equipment intact.

In the end when we got down there, the younger Torside dockers had the situation 'sorted'. The OSD had gone, there was only one busy on the door and a 'deal' had been agreed that the all nighter could go ahead - provided it was not made known in the city. The fact that the Custom House was stuck in the North End, and a good taxi ride away was going to be sufficient to prevent that. Motto - next time squat some 'social space' nearer to where people are.

Still it wasn't so bad. There were hot showers, the building was fully carpeted, the heating worked and the rooms were big enough for a huge party. While I was there I got the chance to use my flash - taking a picture of the 'throne' - the toilet the customs used to use to 'await results' for those intent on smuggling 'illegal substances' by swallowing them. Meanwhile, a cafe was organised, the sound system arrived and the party went on and on . . . .

On the Monday there was a picket of the Seaforth dock and the same people were there to help. Along with some of the dockers [including a couple of stewards] they were arrested attempting to invade and occupy some of the cranes . . .

What impression each has gained of the other I cannot say at this stage.

But who knows, social movements have to start somewhere.

PS OSD is the 'Operational Support Group' - the ones who lounge around in vans waiting to crack heads. Every country has its equivalent.

'Busy' is slang in Liverpool for uniformed police.

WoWstands for Women on the Waterfront.

Dave Graham

Dockers Dispute (continued)

(Continued from page 3)

by their own admission a sectional, racist and inward looking, male dominated group is now working consciously to transform itself into something else. Some of these people can never go back to the kind of life they had before.

If we needed concrete proof of this, it is in the recent approaches of the dockers to eco-warriors and other 'marginalised groups' for help and information on ways of waging the campaign; it is also in the contacts the dockers and the support groups are beginning to make with other 'social' movements against the Job Seekers Allowance for instance, which will hit dockers just as it hits other members of the unemployed. Within all these movements the dockers are starting to play a role in 'knocking heads' together. So many of the delegates who have gone all round the country have come back saying they are fed up with having to put up with members of the Left playing their silly games.

Dave Graham

Collective Action Notes

The latest issue of this publication from the USA contains a complete selection of DG's articles on the Dockers' Dispute. Price £2.00 from **PO Box 22962, Baltimore MD21203 USA**

Do Kurdish People lack a state?

Subversive Note: We received a copy of this leaflet from a group of Kurdish Anarchists. It was witten for distribution on Sept 1st, 1996 at a "Peace in Kurdistan Festival". We have edited it slightly for language and shortened it a little for space.

If readers wish to contact the authors, we can forward any correspondence.

Kurdistan is a land where Kurdish people live in an organised feudal and capitalist system, where working people, especially women and children, are suffering from poverty, ill treatment and the oppression of authorities, which are represented by Kurdish parties (Kurdish Democratic Party, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan) and PKK of Northern Kurdistan, whom they are for freedom !, of Kurdistan as much as Yasser Arafat (the hero!! of the national liberation !!, for the past two decades) is doing for the freedom!, of poor Palestinian people!!

After the IRAQI authorities were forced to leave the South of Kurdistan in March 1991 by the sheer force of uprising by soldiers and poor people of the South and Kurdistan of IRAQ, for that short period the poor people in their unity against government felt their strength and showed to themselves and the world what kind of storm will come when the bottom of society is on fire and in revolt.

To crush and strangle the uprising as quickly as possible, IRAQI government thugs, with the help of the allied troops in the area, united in a holy alliance against the revolt to bring back law and order to the South of IRAQ and massacre unarmed slaves, as happened to our comrades in the Paris Commune at the hand of the French government and Bismarck's troops 125 years ago.

Then in Kurdistan, Kurdish parties (PUK and KDP) in the name of free Kurdistan and supported by landowners, merchants and a large number of shop owners who control the movement in the market, established themselves as the new bosses of Kurdistan, crushing with an iron fist any discontent and challenge to their power and their properties like any other authority in the world.

Of course, this doesn't surprise us as Anarchists. Clearly we see that classes means clashes, we see any government means violence, murder and robbery against poor working class people of this rotten world. .....

That is why we say, it is a big lie and an unforgivable lie to tell the world though the mass media that a majority of the Kurdish people are suffering in life because all they lack is a powerful Kurdish state!! The truth is that the poor population of Kurdistan are suffering like the working class population of the rest of the world in many ways from the brutal forces of the capitalist system and their own authorities.

Our task, as Anarchists, is to tell the workers, teachers, students in Kurdistan on farms, in schools, at workplaces not to be fooled to struggle for a change of bosses from Turkish to Kurdish, from Persian to Kurdish, from Arabic to Kurdish! They should understand and take lessons from their own history and working class history, that the solution is in a Communist-Anarchist revolution, is an enormous and a bloody task, the preparation for that aim must be organised and linked on an international scale, otherwise we waste our energy without it.

Light with the flame of revolt, hearts and consciousness of Turkish, Persian and Arab workers, students, soldiers to end the power of warmongers, the power of poverty and the power of money.

Your mission is to destroy authorities for ever, not to create a new mini-one in the name of Kurdistan. Kurdistan and the rest of the world could be a garden for life without states.

Long live Kurdish language and music.

Long live the spirit of Communist-Anarchist revolution in the middle East and in the rest of the world.

Our aim is to wipe out religion, state, racism and money.

Kurdish Anarchists.

subversion discussion meeting
Green Communism? Issues of Ecology and Social Transformation
Friday November 22nd.
Hare and Hounds, Shudehill,
Manchester City Centre
7.45 pm
subversion discussion meeting

Texas State Death Factory

This month marks six and one half years of incarceration for me here at the famous Huntsville Walls unit. If the walls and bars of this institution could speak out they no doubt would weep endless tales of cruelty and agony, not the least of which would include the multitude of men murdered officially here by the state since the 1850s by hanging, electric chair, or the latest most antiseptic method, death by lethal injection.

Having lived at this fascist cowboy gulag long enough to make a few observations and inquiries about the state-sanctioned murders carried out here, my fellow cons and I have collected a few facts about the methodology used by the state in these affairs, and the professional state hacks who are the perpetrators of these deeds. As well, some other professional scum are mentioned who are accomplices in these acts. But first a small historical account.

Since the brief moratorium on capital punishment ended in 1976, 104 prisoners (not counting those killed in 1996) have been put to death by the state of Texas. There has been a progressive numerical escalation of state murders yearly in Texas as well as the rest of the death penalty states in the US since 1976. Texas however leads in state homicide, having put to death one third of all those executed in the US since 1976. The 1990s in Texas have been a particularly bloody decade with state murders being carried out in a more conveyor belt assembly line fashion, repetitive, efficient, and somewhat clandestine. The fact that these state murders are no longer isolated events, but repetitive, serves to desensitise the people in the region somewhat. In 1993 and 1994 I counted 14 state murders per year, yet 1995 saw 19 state murders carried out in all. As the political and economic context continues toward the extreme reactionary and more stringent legislation is passed limiting appellate options for death row prisoners, the Texas death assembly line will get much busier.

Up until recently all state murders were carried out at midnight in typical prison fashion. As of late, a change of policy has the murders carried out at 6 p.m. while we cons are locked down for the evening count. During the midnight phase, the soon to be murdered was transported over here from death row on the Ellis 1 Unit some time in the a.m. He takes his last ride taking in the sights of a world that has changed vastly since his entombment knowing life's sweet hum will likely cease very soon. This ride is usually taken after spending anywhere from 8 to 17 years in confinement fighting appeals. For many, such a ride has been taken once or twice before having only a last minute stay of "execution" retrieve them from the state's death clutches.

While the future state victim whiles away his remaining hours waiting for death the professional vultures and leeches get ready for the bloodfest.

Upon arrival, then as now, the prisoner is appointed a clergyman (unless he declines) to talk with if he wishes while he sweats out his last few hours hoping for a miracle or a stay to be granted by the political bosses. The last clergyman (nicknamed the "Killer Clergyman" by some) quit his position here probably as a matter of conscience since he witnessed every execution here since the moratorium was lifted.

It is said that this same clergyman overstepped his capacity as saver of souls and counsellor of salvation, and actually helped the pigs send one condemned man off to the great beyond by helping to subdue the fellow when he wouldn't relinquish his life peaceably. The prisoner obviously didn't buy into the hereafter spiel.

While the future state victim whiles away his remaining few hours waiting for death in his holding cell, having his last meal (cheeseburger and french fries best alternative and most frequent choice) all of the professional vultures and leeches get ready for the bloodfest. This assortment of social pariahs, participants, facilitators and spectators consists of various bourgeois media scum waiting to get their scoop, high-ranking screws with their pinched solemn authoritarian faces emanating officialdom, the top pieces of shit at the faecal hierarchical apex (wardens etc), the Texas attorney general (a political hustler and liar), some Texas Rangers (notorious machine-gun wielding strike breakers and scab herders), doctors, coroners, lawyers are all present.

As the day wanes on, the prison kitchen where I was forced to perform non-wage labour would have some of the less class conscious convict slaves cook up a massive assortment of artistically decorated confections consisting of doughnuts (standard pig staple), fried pies, cookies, cinnamon rolls, bear claws, as well as cheese plates and cheeseburgers topped off with gallons of fruit juice. All of these culinary delights, more conducive to the ambience of a birthday party than a death fest, are put forth for the spectators to gorge themselves on at the tax payers' expense. As the lard condiments are consumed by the cop spectators, they're gripped in a massive euphoric sugar rush and the blood lust sets in. They all sit around laughing and joking, slapping each other on the back and reinforcing each others' faith in the state awaiting the big moment. Unfortunately the prisoner's family is forced to witness their son's death in the company of this lot.

When execution time edged closer, the prisoner was brought in and strapped to a specially fashioned swivel gurney with a microphone dangling just a few feet above his head. In this way any sound the prisoner may utter from now until his death is made audible to the pigs and the prisoner's family who are all watching from behind a glass viewing window.

One of the physicians' assistants here on the prison medical staff (another accomplice) comes in and hooks the prisoner up to an I.V. which leads to a euthanasing device. This device has three tubes leading away from it for three state murderers to secretively (out of sight) drop their death chemicals in. The reason they use 3 tubes is because two state murderers only administer fake solutions while the third administers the potassium chloride

"The second man had one bag of personal effects. Before I could finish inventorying his stuff they were driving his body out in the hearse."

which stops the heart. This is supposed to obfuscate guilt much like the dummy rounds used in firing squads. To show that they are good sports about the whole thing, the pigs also offer the prisoner an adult diaper. These are kept under special lock and key.

So the condemned man waits in this condition 'til midnight and if no stay is granted by the courts or the governor (George Bush Jr is our current head crook) the death freaks carry out their foul deed.

It's actually debatable if three different people are chosen each time as killers. Some sources have it that it's the same three people volunteering to do it each time. It's known that one of the killers is an ex tunnel rat in Viet Nam who smells of sadism. He is a high ranking official of the cess heap. This "god and country" fellow is reported to get paid 1,000 dollars per murder but is said to brag "I'd do it for nothing". The same individual when making his exit after an execution night is said to whistle a merry tune if the execution was carried out but to be extremely red faced and pissed off if the prisoner was granted a stay.

So the prisoner goes out watching his family for the last time surrounded by a bunch of doughnut eating cops, media scum and other agents of death culture. The coroner pronounces the deed final and the state murder victim is bagged up and driven out of the prison compound in a black minivan to the mortuary. If his family doesn't claim him, or he has no family, he gets a nameless numbered headstone courtesy of the state amongst the multitude of other state murder victims in the prison cemetery.

As I said earlier, the execution time has been changed to 6 p.m. now. It's usually fairly certain now when a death row prisoner is shuttled over here that a stay of execution will not be a prospect. There are some exceptions though.

We had a double state murder here not long ago. I look for this to be a more frequent occurrence. One source states that it was his job to inventory the condemned prisoners' personal effects on the night of this double killing. "The first execution took a long time, but then came the hearse driving out the first body. As they were driving out with the dead man the second condemned man was being driven in and the two vans were parked at opposite sides of the gate for a while. Then they slowly passed each other. The second man had one bag of personal effects. Before I could finish inventorying his stuff they were driving his body out in the hearse."

The same source reports: "After one execution, the hearse was driving through the checkpoint and the screw in the back of the hearse guarding the body was actually sitting on top of the dead prisoner. Out of respect for the dead I offered said screw a milk crate to sit on."

The latest addition to the death house is a partition in the viewing area which will allow the crime victim's family to witness the murder along with, but separately from, the prisoner's family. This ostensibly is supposed to promote something called closure. All it really does is legitimise the state as problem solver, authority and arbiter.

One final word, when the screws are confronted as to how they feel about being participants in state murder, they all bleat like the sheep at Nuremberg, "I was just doing my duty."

By K.G. Quotes from A.O'C. and other sources.

In Memoriam.

The murdered of 1995 in Texas.
Jan 4 Jesse D Jacobs Jan 17 Mario S Marquez Jan 31 Clifton C Russel Jan 31 Willie Ray Williams Feb 7 Jeffrey D Motley Feb 16 Billy Gardner Feb 21 Samuel Hawkins Apr 6 Noble D Mays Jun 1 Fletcher T Mann Jun 8 Ronald K Allridge Jun 14 Karl Hammond Jun 20 John Fearance Jr Aug 15 Vernon Sattiewhite Sep 19 Carl Johnson Jr Oct 4 Harold J Lane Dec 6 Bernard Amos Dec 7 Hai Hai Vuong Dec 11 Esequel Banda Dec 12 James M Briddle

Huddersfield ABC organise support for class war prisoners. They can be contacted by writing to:
Huddersfield ABC
c/o 17-21 Chapel St
Bradford
BD1 5DT
UK

The JSA and the Dole Workers Strike

Here, in Brighton, we have been involved in the rather uphill battle against the JSA for more than a year now. When the selective strikes in the Employment Service began last November all three Job Centres in Brighton came out on strike. We gave our full support to the strikers and took up the task of leafleting the entire two week signing-on cycle, explaining to claimants the reasons for the strike and its connection with the implementation of the JSA. Since the end of the strike we have established close relations with the more militant workers in the dole offices which are now being formalised in the 'Brighton Against the JSA' group that is to be formally launched on May 1st. This will bring workers in the Benefit Agency, the Housing Benefit Office and the Employment Service together with claimants and other people opposed to the JSA.

However before considering the significance and potential of Brighton Against the JSA and similar groups, we would first like to respond to the articles on the Employment Service Strike in *Subversion* 18 in order to clarify a few points.

Firstly, we think it is important to emphasise both the immediate basis for unity between claimants and ES workers and the importance of the current changes that are being imposed within the welfare system. Performance Related Pay, the JSA, 'active signing' and workfare projects are not simply another set of measures to cut costs and reduce the numbers on the dole. They are all part of a single concerted effort to radically restructure the administration of the welfare state and the class compromise embodied within it. A point that was soon grasped in the course of the strike by many of the strikers.

However, to understand the full implications of this restructuring it is perhaps necessary to place these changes in an historical context. (To do this properly would require more than a little research which we have yet to do. However, we can tentatively put forward a brief sketch which for present purposes should be sufficient).

The present benefit system for the unemployed was originally established as a central part of the post-war settlement of 1945. As such it expresses the post-war class compromise. The deal was simple: in return for benefits sufficient to cover short term subsistence the unemployed would have to make themselves available for any suitable work in their trade or profession. This deal pre-supposed two things, first the government's commitment to 'full employment' through the use of Keynesian demand management policies and secondly a general acceptance of wage-labour by the working class. Given 'full employment' most unemployment would be short term and cover people for the few weeks while they were between jobs. Anyone not seeking work, who was not completely unemployable, would soon be found work by the employment exchange, as it was then called. With the relatively small numbers of unemployed the costs of paying benefits were limited and could easily be paid out of transfers from the working class as a whole through National Insurance contributions or general taxation.

With the crisis of the 1970s, which saw the flight of capital in the face of increasing working class militancy, it soon became clear that Governments in the industrialised economies could no longer sustain a commitment to full employment. In Britain the initial response to the development of mass unemployment was to mitigate its effects as much as possible. The Labour Government at this time was committed to a strategy of defusing class militancy through a corporatist deal with the unions that came to be expressed in the now infamous 'social contract'. This demanded an 'equality of sacrifice' from all sections of the working class. To minimise conflict with those in work, wage restraint had to be matched by a commitment on the part of the government and employers to minimise compulsory redundancies and achieve the necessary reductions in the work force through 'natural wastage' (i.e. not replacing people who leave or retire). However, this 'freezing of posts' simply led to a dramatic increase in youth unemployment as those leaving school or college found it harder to find work. In response to this increase in youth unemployment, which threatened to place a whole generation outside the experience of wage-labour, the Labour Government introduced the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOPS), which was later extended and made compulsory as the Youth Training Scheme (YTS), the first in a series of dead end make-work schemes which pretend to offer training or work experience for crap money.

Performance Related Pay, the JSA, 'active signing' and workfare projects are not simply another set of measures to cut costs and reduce the numbers on the dole.

The Labour Government's strategy was eventually smashed in the winter of discontent in 1979. The new Tory Government under Thatcher adopted a radically new strategy. Abandoning the old social consensus it sought to use mass unemployment to impose a substantial restructuring of British capital. Within little more than a couple of years of Thatcher coming to power unemployment doubled to over three million. Mass redundancies decimated whole industries leaving vast industrial waste lands in many areas of the country. Yet the Government was careful not to exacerbate the situation at this time.

One of the first acts of the new Tory government was to abolish earnings related benefits to prevent an explosion in benefit payments following their proposed policy of mass redundancies, but beyond that the first Thatcher government for the most part maintained the conditions and levels of benefits. At the same time the policy of mass redundancies was cushioned by substantial redundancy payments, particularly to older workers who had worked for a long time in the industries that were being wound down. For the government at that time the consequent expansion in the welfare budget was seen as a price worth paying for the major restructuring of British industry. Inefficient and 'overmanned' industries could be closed down while the threat of redundancy and mass unemployment encouraged those still in work to accept the eradication of restrictive working practices and greater 'flexibility'.

In order to curb the increasing costs which resulted from the policy of mass unemployment the government attempted to hold down administration costs. This resulted in a significant relaxation of the benefit regime. Firstly, the increase in the numbers signing on was not matched by a corresponding increase in the numbers working in the DSS or the Unemployment Benefit offices. With the consequent increase in workload the welfare departments had to increasingly concentrate on their core activities of paying out benefits and reduce their policing and snooping activities. [Another important change at this time was the transfer of the administration of housing benefits from the DSS to local authorities. This meant that there was no longer routine inspections by the DSS of claimants houses, which had been an important means for checking that people were not cohabiting, working on the side, or making false

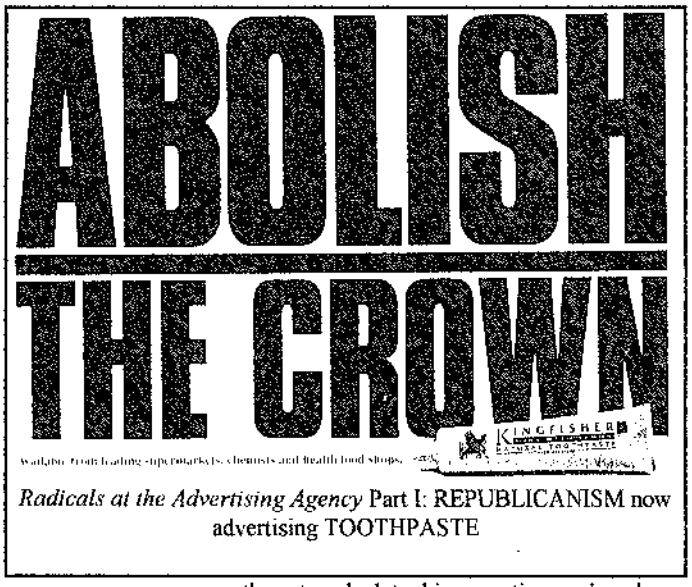
claims]. Secondly, along with most white collar public sector workers, pay was held down further undermining the notion that it was middle class work. As a result of both the increased work load and the demotivation of dole workers through the decline in their relative pay and status, combined with the fact that for most people there was little if any 'suitable employment', the pressures on the unemployed to find work diminished substantially during this period.

Having defeated the miners in 1985 the Government felt confident enough to tackle the problem of the high costs of mass unemployment. This resulted in the Fowler review under which Supplementary Benefit was replaced by Income Support and special allowances for laundry and heating were abolished in 1988. In order to prevent the young becoming too accustomed to not working benefits were withdrawn from 16-18 year olds and the level of benefits were cut by 30% for those under 25. In addition significant changes were made to the conditions of entitlement for benefits. It was now no longer sufficient to be 'available for suitable employment'; it was also necessary to be 'actively seeking work' even if there was no work to be had!

It was also at this time that regular Restart interviews were introduced to pressure the unemployed to accept places on the various training Schemes. During the late 1980s periodic drives were made, mainly it seems to reduce the unemployment figures before an election. As a result a cycle emerged. Before an election the government would expand training and various make-work schemes, and issue directives to the employment offices to fill the new vacancies so as to reduce the unemployment figures. The long term unemployed would then face repeated Restart interviews until they accepted a place on a scheme. Then following the election the Government would face the need to cut back on public spending and the training schemes would be cut back, Restart interviews would be curtailed, and it would become very difficult to get on a scheme even if you wanted to.

So, as we have noted, in the early 1980s, with the aid of mass redundancies and high unemployment the productivity of British industry was transformed and with it the profitability of British capital. Whereas in the 1970s Britain had been the 'sick man' of Europe prone to the 'English disease' of industrial unrest, in the 1980s Britain became the cutting edge in the restoration of capital's profitability.

Yet sustaining high unemployment together with a relaxed benefit regime meant that increasing numbers of the unemployed had little incentive to compete in the labour market. As the 1980s wore on increases in productivity through more flexible working conditions had to be paid for through increasingly high wages. Indeed, for most people in work the 1980s saw wages rising far faster than prices in contrast to the real cuts in wages which were experienced under the last few years of the previous Labour Government. Even in the boom at the end of the 1980s unemployment did not fall much below 2 million yet even these levels did little to curb the demands for pay increases significantly above the rate of inflation.



Radicals at the Advertising Agency Part I: REPUBLICANISM now advertising TOOTHPASTE

It took another severe recession, and with it another substantial increase in unemployment, to break rising real wages and introduce the increased job insecurity of short term contracts and part-time work necessary to maintain the profitability of British capital. But with this recession of the early 1990s has come the burden for the state of increased long-term unemployment. Even now, after 4 years of 'economic recovery', unemployment is still higher than it was in the late 1980s. Furthermore, attempts to press down the wages of lowest paid workers are now running into the floor of benefits.

As even Peter Lilley admits, following the Fowler Review there is little scope for cutting the level of benefits since they are so low already! The strategy of the government to reduce the welfare bill has consequently been twofold. Firstly it has sought to withdraw entitlement to benefits from increasing numbers of people. As a result benefit entitlements have been progressively withdrawn from students and from foreign workers, and most recently from asylum seekers. The habitual residency test and the all work test have been introduced. Secondly, the government has sought to tighten up the benefit regime. This has lead to the requirement that claimants expand their job search after three months and the provision for more regular Restart interviews to check up on the unemployed's job seeking, and the introduction of compulsory Jobplan and Restart courses after one and two years of unemployment.

However, these efforts by the government have repeatedly run into problems due to the entrenched working practices and workers resistance in the Dole offices. Seeing themselves as overworked and underpaid many dole workers have been reluctant to work harder to discipline the unemployed on behalf of the government. [As well as the differences between individuals there have been significant regional variations in how enthusiastically workers have enforced the benefit rules, which has affected how claimants have seen their role]. This entrenchment has concrete expression in the common experience amongst claimants of being helped through some of the trick questions by counter staff and by the need for the government to instruct workers not to give claimants advice on how to claim the most benefits. It has also been demonstrated in the repeated failure of the Department of Employment to impose more regular Restart interviews. The Department of Employment had to repeatedly initiate drives to impose stricter benefit controls, only to have the situation revert to normal once the drive was over.

It is in this context that we have to grasp the significance of the implementation of the JSA and the recent Employment Service strike over Performance Related Pay. The JSA is part of a concerted attempt to radically restructure the administration of benefits in order to break the long established working practices and workers resistance. The Benefits Agency and the Employment Service are to merge, resulting in the relocation of many workers and widespread redundancies for others. The overall effect will potentially be a significant assault on emergent class recomposition in this sector. With this restructuring the government not only hopes to increase efficiency in the administration of benefits but also open the way for the imposition of stricter benefit regimes which will force the unemployed to compete in the labour market and thereby

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undermine the pay and conditions of those in work.

Already, along with other government departments, the DSS and the Department of Employment have been formally constituted as semi-autonomous agencies that are supposed to have an arms length relation to national government at Whitehall. Instead of the old command structure these agencies are supposed to have contractual relations with central government and are expected to fulfil certain contractually agreed performance targets as if they were a commercial enterprise. These performance targets, which are mostly based on cutting costs i.e. the numbers claiming benefits, now have to be imposed on the workers. The old civil service system of pay and promotion based on seniority has now to be replaced by pay and promotion based on performance - which in this case is largely based on the numbers that can be forced to sign off or accept workfare schemes.

Originally, management sought the loyalty of dole workers through the security of employment offered by civil service pay and conditions, limited career prospects for those who stayed long enough, and to some extent the middle class aspirations then typical of white collared workers. As we have seen, over the past 20 years this arrangement has already been significantly undermined. But now the whole agreement is to be torn up. Instead the government hopes to use the stick of casualisation and job insecurity and the carrot of performance related pay and promotion to encourage dole workers to do its dirty work. But this is by no means assured of success. As has already happened it can lead to increased hostility and antagonism from the workers as they become more and more proletarianised. The contractual relations of the various benefit and employment agencies may place the onus on local management, but what happens if the contracts become impossible to implement? The stakes are therefore fairly high and success by no means assured.

Hopefully this brief historical sketch, incomplete though it may be, goes some way towards giving a context through which we may be able to grasp the full significance of both the recent Employment Service strike, the JSA, and their connections with other current changes to the benefit system. It may also allow us to shed a little more light on the controversy raised by the second article, 'Solidarity, Good and Bad', in *Subversion* 18. This article raises the problem of the class alignment of dole workers given the repressive functions they have to carry out in their work for the state. This is of course an important question and one we cannot hope to deal with adequately here.

Yet what we must say, and a point at least implicit in our historical analysis, is that in addressing this question it is vital that we are not too rigid or dogmatic. Firstly, we have to bear in mind how peoples reaction to their function and position within both capital and the state can change in certain historical conditions. Clearly many factory workers who have no repressive functions

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to perform on behalf of the state or capital can be 'anti-proletarian' in that they scab on strikes for example; on the other hand in very exceptional circumstances those in overtly repressive functions, such as the army or even the police, might revolt and come over to our side! [This doesn't mean that we believe the police are 'workers in uniform' or any other such nonsense that would prevent us attacking them when we have the opportunity!].

Secondly, it is important to recognise that the structures of the state and capital are the embodiments of class struggle. They are expressions of given class compromises and are transformed when such class compromises are renegotiated. (Thus, for example, for the state Restart interviews are a means of pressuring the unemployed off the dole but up until now they have had to be presented and organised as a means of 'helping' the unemployed to find work).

Apart from taking too rigid and dogmatic a view, the problem of 'Solidarity, Good and Bad' is that it seems to be based on the false assumption that the Employment Service is faced with a mass of claimants who are refusing work so that its primary function is to force them all into work. Although it is true that over the past 20 years mass unemployment has led to increasing numbers who use the dole to refuse work, it is still true that the large majority of the unemployed want work if only because they need the money. The primary function of most dole workers, particularly those on the front line, is not repressive but simply the administration of benefits i.e. registration of claimants and paying out of benefits. Of course this may mean that some dole workers distinguish between 'genuine' and 'non-genuine' claimants or have a 'hate the punter' mentality, whilst others may be careerists and hope to curry favour by being overzealous in those 'repressive functions' that they do carry out. But the important point is that these attitudes are not given in stone. They are open to change, particularly in a period of change such as the present!

Indeed we can see the strike and the ongoing resistance to the JSA by dole workers as being against the intensification of the policing aspect of their role. Many dole workers recognise the sharpening of the contradiction in their position and have attempted to resolve it by striking. Our common interest with the strikers is that they don't want to behave like cops just as we don't want them to. At meetings with strikers a common sentiment they expressed was that they had joined to 'help people not to police them.' This reflects a certain patronising attitude to claimants but one that began to be undermined by our engagement with their struggle. Our shared interests were immediately obvious to the many other workers who have been virtually conscripted off the dole and who can still see themselves on the other side of the counter.

But perhaps the weakest part of this article is the picture it conjures up of a powerful movement of class conscious claimants being able to impose conditions on its solidarity! [That is not to say that we would support any strike unconditionally or even any strike by employment workers regardless of the issue. The point for us was not an abstract ideological issue of whether or not to announce our support based on what side of the class line we judged the workers to fall but an attempt to seize the practical opportunities offered by the strike. Our extensive practical support for this strike was on the

GET UP, GO TO WORK, GO HOME, GO TO BED, GET UP, GO TO WORK, GO HOME, GO TO BED, GET UP, GO TO WORK, GO HOME, GO TO BED, GET UP, GO TO WORK, GO HOME GO TO BED

[You need a holiday. And a MetroCard]

FOR REGULAR BUS & TRAIN USERS METRO

Radicals at the Advertising Agency
Part II: MONOTONY OF EVERYDAY LIFE now advertising BUS PASSES

basis and condition that it was in our immediate interest that it succeeded]. The problem is that at present we have little to offer in return for such conditions! From our experience the vast majority of claimants were sympathetic to the Employment Service workers strike - once it was pointed out that it would not affect their benefits - but virtually no one, apart from ourselves, was prepared to do anything more about it! This is not to say that the unemployed cannot organise themselves. Indeed here in Brighton Justice?, the group set up to oppose the Criminal Justice Act, is more or less entirely made up of claimants. But there seems to be a reluctance amongst this milieu to organise themselves as unemployed. Apart from a few individuals, Justice?, dominated as it is by liberal and life-style politics, has failed to become involved in supporting the Employment Service strike or in the anti-JSA campaign. That this problem is widespread was clearly evident in the recent demonstrations in London and Kent which could only muster a couple of hundred people.

Finally, we would like to make a few comments regarding the Employment Service workers strike. As your other article anticipated the Employment Service strike was successfully undermined by the Union. But it is perhaps important to examine how the union were able to do this. As far as we could see it was clear that there was a lot of anger across the country at the current changes occurring in the Employment Service as a consequence of the introduction of the JSA and this became focused on the question of performance related pay. However, it was not the case of militant workers committed to industrial action being pulled back on the union leash. On the contrary it seems that in most offices there has been limited experience of industrial action and many workers are a bit apprehensive at the possible consequences of taking action.

As a result most militant activists, isolated in their particular offices, have tended to gravitate towards the Broad Left. It was the Broad Left which pushed for the strike, but could only coax the workers out on the basis that all strikers would get full strike pay. It was on this basis that the ballot for selective strike action won a 2-1 majority last November. No doubt the Broad Left, who control the Employment Service section of the CPSA, hoped to escalate the strike from the original 40 offices. But they were resolutely opposed by the national executive who pleaded insufficient funds to finance an escalation on this basis. Perhaps ironically, the national executive were able to 'outleft' the Broad Left in the final ballot which ended the strike by balloting for an all out indefinite strike but with no guarantee of full strike pay. This was rejected by a 2-1 majority.

THERE ARE MORE THINGS THAT BRING US TOGETHER THAN KEEP US APART.

BRITISH AIRWAYS

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Radicals at the Advertising Agency Part III: INTERNATIONALISM now advertising an AIRLINE

It seems at present that most Employment Service workers are unwilling to break with the prevalent white collar worker mentality and strike on less than full pay. This may change or other tactics may develop. Local strikes are now breaking out in the Benefits Agency and it will be interesting to see how these develop. Faced with the obstacles placed in the way to action by the union some of the more militant dole workers are looking beyond the union to claimants and other workers through the recently established London against the JSA and Brighton against the JSA groups. The question now is whether, through organisations such as Groundswell, claimants can make a contribution/intervention in these new groups or whether they will eventually become overwhelmed by the leftist baggage many of the union activists bring with them!?

Ivan Boesky for Brighton Autonomists

Manchester Anti-JSA Group can be contacted by writing to: Dept 99 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW. They meet alternate Wednesdays at the Vine Pub, Kennedy St, off Fountain St, near Manchester Town Hall

BOOK REVIEW

From the bottom up: three texts by Anton Pannekoek. Published by Collective Action, POB 22962, Baltimore, Maryland 21203, USA. Price $2.50/£3.

This pamphlet, mentioned previously in *Subversion*, brings together 3 articles written in the 1940s by the Dutch 'council communist' Anton Pannekoek, with a short Introduction which describes the political current to which Pannekoek belonged.

In the first article, 'Party & Class', Pannekoek states his opposition to the so-called "revolutionary party" (a contradiction in terms in his opinion) which seeks to lead and control the working class and to seize power for itself. Pannekoek favours instead fluctuating groups of people who share the same basic ideas, coming together to discuss practicalities, to clarify their views through discussion, and to propagandise their conclusions.

In 'Strikes' Pannekoek traces how, as capitalism developed this century, trade unions became "agents of capital, whose job it is to impose the unsatisfactory capital-dictated working conditions upon the unwilling workers", and what the consequences of this have been for changing forms of class struggle.

The third (and longest) article is titled 'Why Past Revolutionary Movements Have Failed'. It tries to explain the defeat of the revolutionary wave in Western Europe (Germany especially) at the end of the First World War. Pannekoek's answer is basically that it was the Bolsheviks wot done it: "The beginnings of a proletarian revolution in the West had been killed by the powerful middle class revolution of the East". (By "middle class revolution" he meant one whose main task was to develop capitalism).

The Introduction admits that "much of Pannekoek's writings were situation-specific" and that "Without a doubt later capitalist development has long passed them by". However Pannekoek and his comrades' understanding of capitalism and its gravediggers was as advanced as it could be for its time. If nothing else these three articles give an excellent view of a certain stage in the historical growth of some of the political views held today by Subversion and groups like us.

3 Strikes and a Funeral

Elswhere in this issue can be found the article "The JSA and the Dole Workers' Strike" by a member of Brighton Autonomists. The final part of it is an attack on an article of mine entitled "Solidarity, Good and Bad" which appeared in Subversion 18. The controversy between us links-in to an important debate within Groundswell (the network of anti-JSA groups throughout the country) so I will use the Brighton criticism as the starting point for this commentary.

The first thing I want to say is that the bulk of "The JSA and the Dole Workers' Strike" was unexceptionable and indeed extremely interesting. However, towards the end the tone was sadly lowered by the appearance of swear-words like "rigid" and "dogmatic", signalling the start of a volley of (in my view) hasty and ill thought-out criticisms lobbed in my direction.

There are four points I want to make in reply:

First, what's this crap about dogma? What dogma is it, exactly, that my article conforms to? I am not aware of anyone or any group having expressed the viewpoint that I put forward in it - it is simply an attempt to synthesize my own experience and thinking on the matter;

Second, the presence or absence of a mass of claimants refusing work is not relevant in my view. You might as well say that the police are not primarily a repressive body on the grounds that the majority of working class people do not break laws on the whole. The point is of course what happens if they DO break the law;

Third, I am of course as aware as anybody that there is no mass movement of claimants "able to impose conditions on its solidarity" but so what? Revolutionaries, and class conscious workers, shouldn't accept things which are unsupportable because we lack strength. We pursue our class interest to the best of our ability. Indeed, the article's own footnote on this point (no. 4) admits this, rather contradicting the main point.

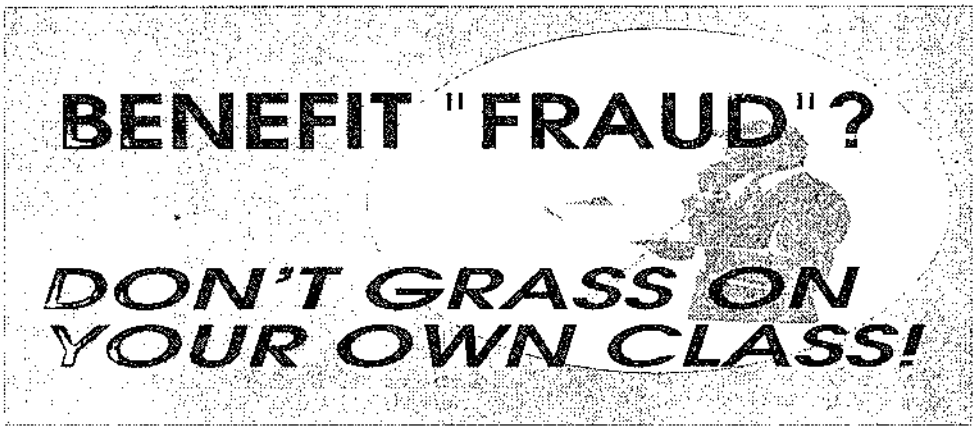
And Fourth, the remainder of footnote 4 presents the further point that the determining factor should be an assessment of what is in "our immediate interest" rather than an "abstract ideological issue". On the contrary, if there is a conflict between immediate and long-term interest, opting for the former is precisely the definition of opportunism.

Having said that, I think it would be precipitate to accuse the article's author of opportunism. And indeed, the above exchange may exagerate the difference between us, since we both believe an attempt should be made to forge unity between claimants and (some) ES workers.

However, the devil is most certainly in the detail, and a fearsome devil it is.

Knickers in a Twist

Throughout the movement of opposition to the JSA there has been a ferocious disagreement between supporters and opponents of the "3 Strikes" policy which has been adopted by a number of local anti-JSA groups.



POLITICIANS AND THE RICH HAVE STOLEN EVERYTHING OFF US
THEY ARE THE REAL CRIMINALS

For those not au fait with this, it consists of the targetting of a particular manager (or in special cases an ordinary staff member) who goes out of their way to harass claimants. The 1st Strike is to send them a warning letter, the 2nd Strike is to send a final warning letter, and the 3rd Strike, if they still don't "mend their ways" is to put their photo and whatever personal details can be obtained on a poster which is then flyposted all over the place. This can be accompanied by demos against them personally or whatever, but the above is actually a quite "moderate" response.

And the Funeral?

The fact of the matter is that the greatest danger to ES managers (and other staff) will come from individual violent acts from claimants whose money has just been stopped.

Moderate or not, it has still got some people foaming at the mouth, most notoriously Militant Labour, who have openly sided with management over the issue (see the letter from CPSA official and Militant member Frank Bonner reproduced on the next page)

The existence of the 3 Strikes policy is naturally being used by the ES management to try to force a wedge between claimants and ES workers and combat any resistance among the latter to the JSA, but there's no reason for them to succeed in this, and anti-JSA activists have begun to issue leaflets explaining to staff our desire for a joint struggle, and countering management propaganda. In this, people like Bonner are an immediate enemy (openly siding with the ruling class is getting to be quite a tradition among Militant members).

Within the Left as a whole there is division over the policy, with some supporting it and some opposed. Sadly, this is also true of the revolutionary movement. People involved in the Brighton Autonomists/Aufheben "mini-milieu" have consistently opposed it from the beginning.

Groundswell

Groundswell was originally formed by anarchists, but now, and increasingly, contains people from the Leninist Left, such as the SLP,

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the RCG, various Trot groups and the like.

The 3 Strikes was adopted as a nationwide policy and publicised as such, but following this, letters were circulated within the network by Brighton Autonomists and Co. arguing for its rejection.

The argument was that it would frighten the ES workers and bind them closely to management. Subversion believes this is completely false because:
a) The policy is NOT aimed at ordinary workers but at particular individuals known for harassment of claimants, the sort of individuals moreover who are likely to be held in contempt by any workers who are (potentially) sympathetic to our aims;
b) It is a part of the strategy of Groundswell to issue leaflets which make this clear to the workers;
c) There is a "carrot and stick" element in decisions about whether to join a strike or other struggle. Fear of being attacked as a scab can balance fear of the bosses. The knowledge on the part of ES workers that compliance with the JSA will mean lining up with their own bosses against the unemployed, and being SEEN to do so, and thus being an object of class fury and violence, should in our view help to concentrate minds wonderfully.

Unfortunately, the following Groundswell conference abandoned 3 Strikes as a collective policy because of the arguments of Brighton. In this they were aided by some who invoked the autonomy of local groups against the idea of a nationwide policy . This rather fetishizes the concept of autonomy - if we can agree on something collectively we should do so. There's a fine line between autonomy and fragmentation.

The upshot is that the majority of groups and individuals in Groundswell support the 3 Strikes but that the policy has no "nationwide face" and thus will be less widely publicised and some of its potential targets will find it easier to ignore.

Workerism?

The reasoning of Brighton and Co. derives from the fact that the Brighton against the JSA group has from early on had better connections with local ES workers than any of the other Groundswell groups. But this has led them to bend the stick too far in the direction of "caution" in their anxiety to keep the workers "on-side" at all costs.
This approach bespeaks a "workerist " mindset (something the comrades have not been guilty of in the past) - the simple fact is that we are all part of the working class (whether we be claimant, employee, housewife...) and the struggle of one part of our class must not be spurned in the (vain) hope another part of the class maybe struggling later on.

It is a sad fact that, of all the political tendencies in Groundswell, the Brighton people formed the most right-wing in the 3 Strikes argument. The result of their intervention was to partly demobilize this aspect of the struggle. Fortunately, all is not lost, as 3 Strikes is still supported by most activists, and is being implemented increasingly. Accordingly, we should be able to give it more and more publicity.

CPSA **Employment Service Agency Section**

ES/GEN/29/96
TO: All Members in ES
31st July 1996

"Three Strikes and You're Out"

Dear Colleague

Various fringe anti-JSA groups around the country, operating under the banner of "Groundswell" have started to leaflet ES and BA offices with leaflets advertising a "three strikes and you're out" policy. The target of this policy is members of staff in ES and BA who they believe are over-zealously implementing JSA or "harassing" claimants. Groundswell describe their policy as follows:

1st strike	If we receive a complaint against a member of staff they will be sent a written warning about their conduct.
2nd strike	If we receive a further complaint they will get a final written warning.
3rd strike	Any further complaints against them and they will have details of their harassment widely distributed and can expect an angry demo in their office.

Unacceptable Threats

The union has opposed JSA since its announcement and will continue to campaign against it. We recognise its unjust nature and the threats and frustrations it contains for members of staff and claimants alike.

However, we cannot accept that threats directed against members of staff can have any role to play in such a campaign. There is already far too high a level of assaults on staff in Jobcentres. What Groundswell is proposing is not simply harassment, bad enough in itself, but it is an invitation to physical assault. The union is fundamentally opposed to such tactics and threats and is taking steps to make this clear to all those who are involved in opposing the JSA.

What Should You Do?

Management have a responsibility to protect the health and safety of members in ES. The union has written to management asking for an urgent meeting to discuss the steps they intend to take to protect the health and safety of members in the ES. At present their proposals deal with what they will do if an incident occurs. That is not sufficient. They have a responsibility to take steps to protect members from threats of this sort. I will report back to you on the outcome of these talks as quickly as possible.

In the meantime however, members should report any threats they receive to management and to their local union representative in order that steps can be taken to prevent any further harassment. As I indicated above, the union will be talking to those involved in anti-JSA campaigning to emphasise our opposition to these tactics, to re-emphasise that JSA is a government initiative, not something dreamed up by frontline staff in the ES, and to ensure that these tactics are widely rejected.

CPSA Campaigning

CPSA will continue to campain against the JSA. You will have seen a great deal of information circulated to you recently about the problems associated with JSA and the steps we are taking to deal with them. I would encourage you to become involved with the union's activities in this area. This is the best way to work towards our common objectives of a decent and civilised benefit regime administered by an Employment Service which is properly staffed and resourced. We will continue to work with other groups who oppose JSA. Clearly, however, this cannot and will not include groups who threaten and harass CPSA members. I will write to you again when there are further developments to report.

Yours sincerely

Frank Bonner

Frank Bonner
Section Secretary

946/96

The Civil and Public Services Association - Leeds Regional Office
49 Upper Basinghall Street, Leeds LS1 5HR Tel: 0113 243 2627 Fax: 0113 243 2618

What a difference "A-Day" makes

This article has focussed on what is only a part of the struggle against the JSA. It will be for future issues of Subversion to deal with other aspects, such as reports of our activities, and more analytical pieces.

The 7th of October (A-Day) is the official implementation, but opinion is divided as to how big the change will be on that day, as the JSA has been gradually being phased in long before that, and this phasing in may continue until the spring.

This is a struggle that is going to escalate, so watch this space.

Screen off the Bosses, Not the Claimants!

The CPSA, a union active amongst Benefit staff and the 'Employment' Service is organising a strike to demand screens be erected between staff and claimants signing on. This is an insult to all claimants. We are being stigmatised as the problem, when the problem is the new Job Seekers Allowance scheme. ES staff know this will cause problems. The union is trying to direct this concern into scapegoating claimants. The function of the screens is to dehumanise and humiliate claimants. It will encourage anti-claimant attitudes amongst the workforce and in essence is collaboration with the bosses. We must oppose this strike.

Union apologists say that government legislation prevents ES workers striking against the JSA as such, and suggest this is a useful tactic to obstruct the introduction of the JSA. This is two-faced liberal hogwash. The union is hiding behind government legislation to further separate ES workers from claimants.

Workers Autonomy

We appeal to ES workers:

The Bosses make us sick!

Have you looked at your boss recently? Aren't they ugly? Doesn't merely the sight of their face make you feel sick? Demand that they are screened off from workers and claimants alike. This could easily be achieved if the ES supplied each boss with a suitably constructed paper bag to wear over their head, complete with eye holes. They should wear these at all times.
We demand that this new rule be implemented immediately.

The Union hacks make us sick!

What twisted mind dreamt up the idea of screening off claimants? As if claimants are to blame for all the problems that will arise with the JSA. This is not just a red-herring used to divert workers very real concerns about the JSA — it is designed to sabotage the struggle against the JSA. It's designed to set ES worker and claimant against each other. Don't wait for the Union hack to get that plum job in 'human resources management' before insulting them. Tell them where to get off now.

Claimants and ES workers need to learn an important lesson. We must organise *autonomously* of all union apparatuses. The unions have sabotaged struggle after struggle. Their interests are tied up with management and they use every effort to prevent working class initiatives. For example during the Miners Strike ten years ago, dockers refused to unload coal at Immingham. 'Their' union, the TGWU, instructed them to break this boycott and so substantially weakened the strike. The unions moan about tory legislation, but then hide behind it.

There is a growing wave of working class discontent both in the workplace and in the community. We need to set up autonomous workers groups outside all official channels if we are to avoid the defeats of the 1980s.

Workers Autonomy Now!
No More Scapegoating!

Box 15, 138 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS

Democracy and Ballots

Dear Subversion,

Thanks for the literature you sent me recently and for mailing me *Subversion* 19. It was all extremely interesting stuff and a source of a lot of good information. Keep up the good work! (And find enclosed a contribution to help you to do so).

(...)

If it's OK I'd like to raise a couple of questions concerning the "education" and class struggle issue and the issue of democracy.

Of course experiences in the day to day struggles lead some people to become revolutionaries. Also, I agree with you that upsurges in class struggle and periods of crisis in capitalism provide a POTENTIAL revolutionary springboard. The contradictions, class relationships and miseries inherent to capitalism inevitably lead the workers to confront capital and when this happens there is, of course the POTENTIAL for revolutionary consciousness to grow through the realisation of class position and the nature of capitalism. As the current trends within capitalism continue, squeezing and stamping on the working class ever more relentlessly, alongside the growing realisation of the failure of all forms of running the system; then there is definitely a growing POTENTIAL for the escalation of struggle towards the overthrow of the system. However, how many times has the potential been there in past moments of escalated struggle and capitalist crisis only to disappear or to be channelled into reformist, pro-capitalist directions? And why?

Your correspondent DG, in his last report on the Merseyside dockers' dispute revealingly comments about the dockers that, "...by their actions they rejected wage labour, but they remain unwilling to recognise it...". It would appear that their dispute has reached the brink of revolutionary consciousness, but this is held back by the general climate of political ideas. That DG goes on to say that dockers only recognise their rejection of wage labour "in private" goes to show that communist/socialist ideas are still incredibly marginalised, to the point of being unthinkable.

Wouldn't things be different if communist/socialist ideas were generalised throughout the working class? The more widely known, discussed, accepted the communist/socialist case is, then surely the more likely it is that "day to day" class conflict will escalate into a decisive mass struggle against the money system itself. This is where "education" (or promoting the socialist case) rears its head. I feel that the biggest job is getting the socialist case across as widely and loudly as possible. Capitalism will continue to throw up situations where an escalation of class struggle towards communism is possible, but the more workers there are who are conscious communists or are aware of the alternative to capitalism, then I would think the greater the likelihood there is of getting rid of the system.

Subversion seems to damn democracy full stop and I still can't understand why.

Also, would you agree that upsurges of class struggle which don't have a widespread libertarian socialist political consciousness will always run the risk of being hijacked by the Left and the rest of the leadership brigade?

Following on from this, I'd be interested in hearing a clarification of Subversion's views on democracy. I think we all agree that REPRESENTATIVE "democracy" is a farce and that voting for any group that seeks to administer capitalism or lead us is like loading the gun for your own executioner. Likewise there would be no difference if all state and commercial posts were directly elected as they will always act on behalf of the ruling class and against us. Elected police chiefs (as the SWP plan to have in their "Workers State"!!) would still be thugs-in-chief as much as elected politicians act in the same anti-working class way as unelected ones do. But Subversion seems to damn democracy full stop and I still can't understand why.

Is there anything wrong with democracy in the sense of organisation and discussion as equals, the making of decisions by voting, the election of mandated, recallable delegates to relevant bodies etc.? This is, after all the way a free society would surely work. Democracy is a sham under capitalism because people are anything but equals and the capitalist notion of democracy is used to cover this up.

Going on (!) to the issue of parliament, I don't see why it can't be used as PART of the revolution as it wouldn't be used as an instrument of government, but as a means of demonstrating and carrying out the working class majority's wish to abolish the state for good. Also, bearing in mind that, "...the proletarian movement is the movement of the immense majority in the interests of the immense majority" couldn't the vote be used as a way of ensuring that the socialist revolution IS carried out by the immense majority of our class, and not by a minority that would leave the majority passive and open to manipulation by pro-capitalist or leadership elements? By voting, at least we could know exactly where we were. And it would be on OUR terms, as capitalism would already be in final retreat (hopefully) by this stage.(...)

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Subversion Reply

Thanks for your letter...

As you say "we have heard it all before" from the Socialist Party of Great Britain, especially in the north west where we have debated this issue to the point of mutual exhaustion!

However when you say in your letter "...then there is definitely a growing potential for the escalation of struggle towards the overthrow of the system" you have perhaps (inadvertently?) taken one step beyond the usual SPGB approach.

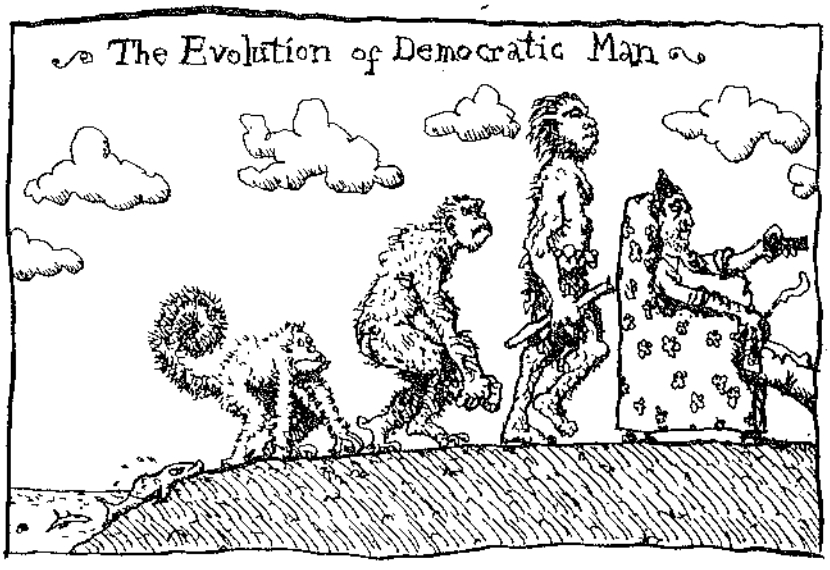
In general the SPGB has only conceived of the 'educative' process of the class struggle from a purely negative point of view. It ignores the possibilities of collective action as a positive experience - the development of class solidarity and confidence in our ability to change material circumstances, if only in small ways. The process is similarly viewed more in terms of individuals' passive reflection in failure, then in the COLLECTIVE advancement of struggle and consciousness.

Whilst *some* underlying long term trends in the development of capitalism (through the interaction of competition and class struggle) appear to benefit the revolutionary movement, in general we see no evidence of any linear, accumulative advancement towards capitalism's overthrow. What we do perceive are *periodic* advances in the escalation of class struggle and subsequent retreats. It is these escalations which *practically* confront large sections of our class with the *need*, as well as the possibility, of going beyond merely defensive actions towards an attack on both the capitalist economy and state. In the long history of capitalism the period 1917-21 was for instance a high point as on a lesser scale was 1968-70, 1980-81 in more recent times. It is precisely in such periods that revolutionary minorities can have a disproportionate influence by encouraging, both theoretically *and* practically, the combining and deepening of struggle.

That doesn't mean we just go away and contemplate our navels the rest of the time, but rather that the balance of our work between theoretical development, general propaganda and agitational activity is consciously altered in relation to the development of the class struggle at any particular time.

All of this leads on to our critique of "democracy" which goes well beyond a simple rejection of Parliament.

In basing our hopes on the escalation and deepening of class struggle as the *starting point* of revolution, we have to accept that this process is something advanced by MINORITIES, often against the passivity of the majority. As the struggle develops these minorities will inevitably grow and on the eve of revolution will doubtless number many millions. The point however, is that we cannot *predict* exactly what proportion of our class needs to be actively involved in consciously attacking capitalism (as opposed to passively going along with events or waiting to see what happens) to start the revolution. It's not a matter of the number of bodies as such, but rather the balance of class power. Furthermore whilst the defeat of all the major capitalist states marks a definitive moment in the revolution, the momentum carries on involving more people, in a more conscious way until communism is firmly established as a new way of life.



In so far as the class struggle is advanced by 'minorities' an over concern for 'democracy' in the abstract becomes a barrier to revolutionary activity. Parliamentary democracy in particular and also 'Party' and 'trade union' democracy have been continually used against the activity of militants seeking to advance the interests of our class.

To oppose 'democracy' is not to support 'dictatorship' or 'elitism' but to *practice* equality and self-activity amongst those committed to struggle, and to seek the continual expansion of the struggle on this basis.

We do *not* view revolution in terms of the extension of political democracy into the workplace, the economy or society as a whole. Rather it should involve the superceding of both dictatorship *and* democracy, the abolition of politics and economics as such.

Whether or not the organisation of communist society involves elections and voting (and we might expect much of everyday life to take on a 'natural' process within certain well defined principles) this is *not* its *essence*, which lies in the conscious creation and re-creation of the human world unmediated by 'exchange' and all its ramifications.

We hope this goes some way to further explaining our approach.

Fraternally,
SUBVERSION

Posties, Tippex and Ballots

More on the postal strikes

We've had 8 one day strikes in Royal Mail now and it has apparently cost them £100 million. A one day strike costs a postie, after deductions, about £25. A lot of posties are disappointed when there isn't a strike day in the week as they are getting used to a five day week, people make arrangements to go out with their families and whenever a strike day has been cancelled there has been a lot of discontent with the Union for messing about with our social plans! While in one respect this could be seen as a positive attitude towards work in general (i.e. anti-work), the way the strikes have been organised has meant that we have had little real participation and the Union has retained almost full control of events and information - this, of course, has made the union bosses very happy. More militant posties are, in fact, very unhappy about the way the strike seems to have been conducted over our heads, without even any explanation of the reasons for the particular tactics used by the Communications Workers Union. A lot of posties think a work to rule would be more effective, while this might well lead to an all out strike (management would probably force us out on some provocation) it would give posties a chance to seize some autonomy from the CWU manipulators.

WHEN WILL ROYAL MAIL BE CRUSHED LIKE A SNAIL UNDER THE FOOT OF A POSTIE ON A CRISP AUTUMN MORN? AND IS OUR DREAM OF TRANSCENDING THE UNIONS ENTIRELY FORLORN?

In Scotland, however, there has been a concerted attempt to defy the "anti-trade union" laws and workers have tried to gain some control of events for themselves. Flying pickets have been really successful, especially when you consider how difficult it is to organise this on single strike days. Since secondary picketing is illegal Royal Mail threatened to sue the Union if it was allowed to continue, this, of course, gave the Union the excuse it needed to attempt a crackdown on such subversive activity. However, because the strikes have only been one-dayers in the main this has not come to a head. Certainly the CWU bosses do not like it when posties take their own initiative, various leaflets from them have threatened all sorts of dire consequences if we do not do exactly as they tell us to. Most "anti-trade union" laws are, in fact, anti-*worker* laws, this becomes evident the more you see the unions using them to control their memberships. Flying picketing is - as the bosses, government, and union bosses realise only too well - essential to workers' effectiveness in industrial action. Not only can it spread the struggle, but it is important for the mutual morale boosting of strikers and the exchange of information amongst workers. There really is a need for the culture of flying picketing to return and the only way for this to happen is for striking workers to get out and do it! What does it matter to us if the union is fined, will posties really be affected if the CWU has to sell the posh hotel it owns? The unions are taking the piss out of us.

Strikers in the big strike in Scotland last November were ready to send pickets down to offices in England but the Union convinced them that although they had got away with flying picketing in Scotland, English laws would somehow not be so tolerant and the whole thing would be impossible. Union bosses, of course, did not approve of the unofficial mass strike in Scotland and were very nervous about it spreading south, so it was lucky for them that "common sense" won the day.

WEIRD STUFF

This is complicated! It has transpired through a leak to the press that some strange shenanigans have been going on in the higher reaches of the CWU bureaucracy. Namely that the first strike ballot that the Union held has been found to be invalid and that the second strike ballot we are due to have soon is to correct this error. We have been told that the second ballot has been called partly to appease calls from Royal Mail, the government, the Labour Party, the media, and every other anti-working class bastard to ballot on Royal Mails (unchanged!) proposals, and partly to see if support for the strike is still strong (which is totally mad since the numbers of strikers proves this to be the case anyway!). However, it seems that the original notification of the strike ballot results which were sent to Royal Mail had had the number of spoilt papers tippexed out. This makes the original ballot invalid.

If the tippex story is true then a couple of questions arise. Why has Royal Mail sat on this information for so long? And will the union be fined? The story is that Alan Johnson, our glorious General Secretary, got an agreement from Royal Mail that they will not pursue the matter, but the threat is that if the tippex story gets out (which it now has!) then private firms may take the CWU to the cleaners for lost revenue. Now, Alan Johnson, who was never in favour of the strike, has wanted to re-ballot the members for a while now on the (crap!) deal so far, but the Postal Executive has refused his wish, since, rightly, nothing fundamental has changed in Royal Mail's proposals. Uncannily, this tippex saga has enabled Alan Johnson to get his way with the Postal Executive, whom he swore to secrecy about the whole thing, since they do not want to let the Union end up in court. Johnson and Royal Mail now hope that the new ballot will go against continuing the industrial action, but even if the ballot proves **for** continuing it is likely that the majority for will be reduced (those who didn't vote before may now vote for an end to action, for example) and this will strengthen Johnson's hand against the Executive and those of us who don't want teamworking or a crap pay deal.

This also shows that democracy is crap and breeds apathy amongst those it is designed to control - we need working class action not democratic ballots! Real life, not politics!

Anyway, due to Johnson's "lack of enthusiasm" for the industrial action he has had his job of writing the union leaflets to the members taken away from him, and Scotland No. 2 branch, so far at this time, has passed a resolution of no confidence in him. They have also passed resolutions on linking the reinstatement of strikers involved in picket-line discipline cases to any final deal on teamworking and pay restructuring in the APC's.

There are quite a few other actions going on around the country, but the union likes to keep these things quiet, after all posties might start winning things if we brought other offices out in support of workers involved in separate office disputes. What the bosses try in one office they will always try

(Continued on page 18)

News from Australia

Parliament Invaded! Shock! Horror!

Introduction

On Monday 19th August, a demonstration in Canberra, Australia, turned into an occupation of that country's Parliament building. The demonstartion was called by the ACTU, the official union organisation. Their response was predictable and once again showed how thoroughly union organisations have been incorporated into capitalism's system of social control.

The following article comprises a series of accounts from eye-witnesses who participated in the eventsx of the day, plus a couple of background pieces from other sources in Australia. All these accounts were obtained off the Internet.

As with all eye-witness accounts, what people saw varied and this is reflected in their descriptions. We have made no effort to 'tidy up' what they have to say.

"The ACTU called a demonstration against the Government's industrial relations for Monday 19 August. Parts of the budget were announced over the previous week including massive cuts for higher education (5% cut over three years, no supplementation for wage increases and expectation of increased student intakes), the ABC and ATSIC (truly sickening level of cuts which will amount to 30% in many areas). The Monday 19 demo was broadened by the ACTU into a protest against these cuts too.

Overall it seems that about 25000 people turned up. By far the largest demo I've seen in Canberra in the 17 years I've been here."

"Big demos happened in most capital cities emcompassing workers, students, indigenous people, and have become generally anti-government demos, even though the unions (that initially called them) hoped to concentrate on proposed labour laws that would end collective bargaining and collective national contracts known as awards. There have been a considerable surge in struggles in the past few months, with a steady stream of big rallies of workers and students over sectoral issues, strikes and some factory/workplace occupations, and recently rioting by indigenous people in rural areas. All of these actions have been limited to the general (bureaucratic, conservative) structures of the unions (which are affiliated with the previously-governing Labour party, and which are facing something of a crisis), and of the "peak organization" of the student, Aboriginal, social sectors. Today, c. 15,000 people rallied in Canberra (the national capital) and marched on Parliament House. In the early afternoon, we started getting radio reports of attempts to storm and occupy the Parliament building by hundreds/thousands of people, and protesters (mainly workers and students I believe) spent about two hours in a part of the building and then in a battle with police (with riot gear) in the main foyer of the parliament building."

"Other protests occurred in Brisbane (5000), Perth (5000), Adelaide (10,000), and Darwin (500). In Darwin, protestors also occupied the Parliament building apparently for a while. In Victoria, we had a general stopwork a couple of weeks ago of about 30 - 40,000 people."

"Actually there were industrial actions in all the major cities yesterday to protest not only budget cuts but the proposed Workplace Relations Bill which as currently written would gut the power of the industrial commissions and push workers toward having to negotiate individually with some employers. Here in Brisbane about 10,000 people demonstrated peacefully and marched through the streets. Coal miners went on a 24 strike nationwide."

"The rally was 25,000 strong despite it not being an official strike day, and about 10% of this tried to get into the Parliament. Police blocked the way and things turned nasty. Battering rams were used by Construction workers to bash in the glass doors and people streamed into the building over the tops of one another. There were several injuries to both protesters and police and 50 or so arrests. The media of course called the action thuggery, the Labor Party and top union officials distanced themselves from the action and will probably use it as an excuse not to call any more strikes or demos and the repressive legislation will get through the senate."

"An Aboriginal group apparently got around or through the police barricades and went up to the front entrance. They were closely followed by groups of workers, especially CFMEU members. Then other people including other unionists and some students joined them. They tried to get into the building and there was a lot of pushing and shoving. Eventually a relatively small number got in. Up to 2000 people may have been involved in the demonstration at the entrance to the building, the bulk of them unionists. I arrived after it had begun and got up to near the entrance of the building but it was very difficult to know what was happening in the front line. It was totally unorganised.

The ACTU started the speaches across the road where most of the crowd was. Some attempts were made by individual union officials to get people away from the entrance, but without much success."

"4 people were arrested, 2 for assault, 2 for trespass - NOT 45 as some media claimed. 45 people may have been detained without arrest (i.e. illegally), but virtually all were released withouth being charged. I was detained with both the protestors who were eventually charged with assault. One told me he had not done anything and was randomly grabbed, the other had his nose broken by cop after decking a copper for punching a girl in the face - he wasn't sorry. 2 (dodgy) assault charges from a rally of 50,000 - that's NOT violent. Despite union leadership and media claims to the contrary, there was NO distinction between the 'official' rally and the 'riot' - the crowd spread from the stage all the way up to the doors. It was virtually impossible to get up to the doors because of the huge number (10,000?) of people who wanted to get in to the building. The crush at the doors was one of the most intense feelings I have experienced at a demo."

"This rally tried to do what every anti-Kennett rally should have done and didn't- confront power directly. The mood was united and festive- I was an anglo guy in a suit and I had Koori's, construction workers, and every kind of person around me in a spirit of solidarity

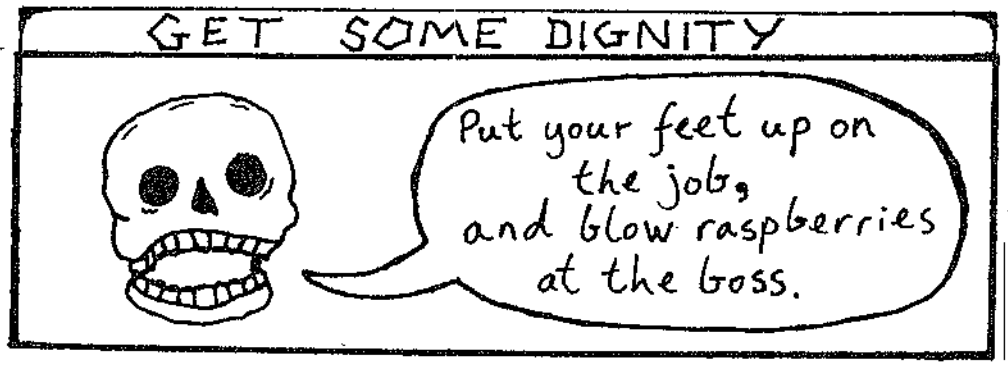
Posties continued

(Continued from page 17)

to spread if they get away with it.

Finally, despite heroic efforts by many posties the union has, by and large maintained control of this industrial action and there has been virtually no propaganda produced by the posties themselves. Obviously there is plenty that we should be communicating to each other. Important industries like the Post (**that is, important to the class struggle**) need to have as many trouble-making, revolutionary types in it as possible. Personally, I feel that many radical supporters of a working class revolution don't actually put themselves in a position where they are of much use. Of course, I understand that radical types as much as anyone want an easy life with a well-paid and cushy job, but we could certainly do with more people in crucial industries.

[big thanks to Petey O. for info and sharp analysis]



as it is possible to keep you there. The company is screwing you every minute of every day, don't stick up for the company, or be proud of the company. Only real thickies will identify with their company, not surprisingly many of this sort come from what is called "the middle class". These sad deluded fools think that what they do is important and that they are valued by the company, it comes as a massive nervous breakdown-type shock if they find out that none of this is true (if they are made redundant, for example).

If the bosses ever want to know what you think about the company and how it could be improved, always say that it is perfect as it is and that you couldn't be happier. If the company wants to know your opinions then it is only trying to get more ideas on how to improve efficiency and make everyone work harder. Whatever you say that has any relation to the truth will be used against all of you, to make you more productive. The company is not interested in your welfare, only its profit margins. Your bosses may seem like decent people (unlikely!), but if they had the opportunity (like their predecessors in the last century, or their counterparts today in other countries) they would love to make us work twice as hard for half the money and stop paying the taxes that go to frivolous things like the NHS. The only reason they don't do these things is because they know that running a totalitarian country is, in the end, more expensive and less efficient than a democracy and also that we would finally get rid of them if they pushed us too far for too long.

Our bosses are more afraid of us than we realise, there's only a few of them compared to the millions of us - luckily for them though we are usually so pathetically dim-witted that we let them get away with virtually anything. They must be laughing their socks off. We wouldn't know what day of the week it was if they didn't tell us.

This bulletin has been produced by a bunch of miserable workers centred around Manchester. It is not important who we are, it is enough to know that we have been pretty miserable for a long time now! and that we have discovered that our condition is common in the working class across the entire planet.
***Miserable Worker** 1 is available from the address below:*

MISERABLE WORKER
Dept. 10, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1

...pass round, duplicate, distribute, throw spanners in the works...

---

and unity. There was a lot of talking, joking, discussing, and mutual support. It was clear what our aim was.
"I was in the gift shop when it was being 'looted'. The aim, as far as I could see, was not to loot the gift shop but gain access to the house. The damage was a by-product of the melee that ensued with the police, and of people's frustrations; it was not the central focus of those involved.
"Lastly I would like to say that I did think there was two rallies. ACTU and trade union officials were continually coming up to the doors and urging people, through megaphones, to return to the 'real' rally. They were treated with laughter, with people saying "enough speeches-we want action". I have my own opinion of where the real rally was.
"After the experience of attending three anti-Kennett *(the premier of Victoria)* rallies, I must say this one possessed an enthusiasm and energy that I have not seen before. If 150 000 people had been there, who knows what might have occurred."

Notes:
ACTU, the Australian "TUC"
ABC - Australian Broadcasting Commission
ATSIC - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Commission (a government funded bureaucracy headed by elected idigenous representatives)
CFMEU Construction, Forestry & Mine Employees Union
Kooris - indigenous people of Southern Australia

Miserable Worker
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Articles on Yugoslavia, the Zapatistas,Prisons, Imperialism and more.
$4.00 or £2.50 from BM CAT, London WC1N 3XX
(don't mention Wildcat on the envelope!)
A Subversion recommended read!

In Defence of Revolutionary Organisation
Continuing the attack on the ICC. A good read.
SAE to Box 15, 138 Kingsland High St, London E8 2NF

Organise!
Journal of the ACF. c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX

Aut-op-sy
An autonomist/communist discussion list on the Internet.
To subscribe, send the message "subscribe aut-op-sy" to majordomo@lists.village.virginia.edu

E-mail?
You can e-mail Subversion at 106014.55@compuserve.com

Miserable worker

Winter 1996/97
No. 2

If you're not miserable then you must be mad!!

The world is one massive, stinking, miserable labour camp.

It is organised so that profits are made for the bosses and so that we (the workers/donkeys/slaves/ants/zombies/mugs) are kept in line. For if we fell out of line then that would threaten their profits. Everything in this world is judged in terms of its value in money. Nothing is worth doing unless it can make you money. The world is full of talented people who waste their lives stuck in a factory, office, or wherever it is they have to work. By the time you've given up all your time and energy to your boss, there's not much else you can do except watch TV, sleep, or get rat-arsed - and that's only after you've done all the chores that need doing around the house.

It would seem as if our greatest desire was to extinguish everything in us that is human and transform ourselves into an army of moronic robots. But this is not our choice, we have been beaten down and crushed until we obediently do what we are told to do, and we have become afraid to raise our voices about anything important.

We feel most like the moronic robots that we are becoming when we are at work. This is because this is the place where they make the most money out of us, *and where we are most humiliated.* (The second most place is in shops). They pay us as little as they can get away with, and make us work as hard as they can.

The work ethic is so ingrained in us that usually they don't have to try very hard to make us work at the rate they require. At the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in Europe, a couple of hundred years ago, bosses had no end of trouble trying to make their new workers (who came from villages and previously worked on the land) get down to some work. For example, after a Sundays revelry workers often would take the Monday, Tuesday and even Wednesday off. These days were known as St. Monday, St. Tuesday etc. and these unnofficial mass holidays caused serious problems for the bosses and owners who wanted to make big profits for themselves. So factories and other workplaces became more like prisons and overseers were chosen for the amount of cruelty they could display. Another method they used to make workers compliant was to give them absolutely no choice: land all over Britain and Europe was cleared of people and these people now had no choice but to go to the cities and find work in the new industries. Soon there started to be more people than jobs, and because it was now impossible to return to the countryside, or find any other kind of work, workers knuckled under and finally started doing what they were told.

200 years down the line and we are so well trained that they don't even have to wave a big stick at us to make us do what they want. We should be ashamed of ourselves. We have become little people who can only say: "Yes, sir. No, sir. Three bags full, sir."

Of course, it is probably true to say that most of us feel that we are not the scaredy cats that our ancestors would see us as. We have a multitude of excuses for why we go along with everything. These range from the cynicism of "keeping your head down", to things like: "I can't do anything else at the moment"; or, "It would never work"; or, "It's the other buggers who'll let you down". *Power* (that is: the government, the bosses, the managers, schools, the media, etc) has put us into a trance so that we have few thoughts of our own, they have shackled our imagination - *what mugs we are to believe ANYTHING said by those who want to keep us working hard so that the rich and powerful can stay where they are now!!*

Work is killing us. We should think about trying to salvage some of our dignity. You can't deny it: to varying degrees the workplace is a war zone. We should, just for the sheer mischief of it, if nothing else, attempt to escalate the tension, so that everyone can see the true, vicious face of management and bosses. Throw a few spanners in the works; while you're clawing back some of your own self-respect watch the buggers in charge become the rabid dogs that they really are.

Remember, it is perfectly honourable to lie to and cheat your bosses, they, after all are constantly lying to and cheating you, plus they have the power to sack you. Don't be a good slave, be a wise one.

With sympathetic fellow workers try to organise your sick leave for maximum benefit to you and maximum detriment to the company. Remember the old adage: There's no point being off sick when you're actually ill.

Remember, company profits don't get filtered down to you. Whatever your bosses are making they will still try to pay you as little

Subversion

Number 21

FREE! or donation

In this issue: South Korea ... Liverpool Dockers Struggle ... "Green" Communism ... Thinking About Getting A Job? ... The JSA ... The IRA ... The Poor The Bad And The Angry ... And more ...

ALBANIAN SAVINGS SCANDAL

WISE WORKERS INVEST THEIR FUTURES IN THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION

Subversion 21

Introduction

Welcome to *Subversion* 21. This isssue contains the usual mixture of stuff... There are articles reflecting and opening up discussions going on within the Subversion group, including the piece on **Green Communism** starting on page 5 and **Thinking About Getting A Job** on page 9. Then there are contributions from comrades and contacts outside the group, like the update on the **Liverpool Dockers' Struggle** on page 3 and a piece we lifted from **The Poor The Bad and The Angry** on the back page. Plus an extra-long **Letters** section starting on page 11 with debates on the **JSA** and **national liberation movements**.

Back Issues

We have plenty of *Subversion* 16, 18 and 20 left. Other numbers are in short supply but send us an SAE and we'll see what we sort out. Alternatively we can provide some articles and our pamphlets on **Ireland** and the **Labour party** on computer disc (PC format preferrably).

The Best of Subversion is a pamphlet comprising a selection of articles from the first 11 issues of *Subversion*. It costs £1.00 inc. p&p. ***Coming soon*** (we hope) will be **The Best of Subversion 2** comprising (you guessed it) a selection of articles from issues 12 to 20. Advance orders welcome.

Appeal for funds

BIG thanks to everyone who has sent us money since the last issue of *Subversion* came out. Whatever you can afford to send is greatly appreciated - cash, stamps, cheques (made payable to Subversion) - we're not fussy!

Subversion, Dept 10, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW England, UK

To contact us by email or on the internet, see "Surfversion" on page 15

Want to get involved in Subversion?

There are many ways you could get involved in Subversion. For instance:

☐ Correspond with us on issues raised in our bulletin
☐ Write articles for inclusion in our bulletin (let us know in advance an outline of what you're thinking of writing)
☐ Take extra copies of the Subversion bulletin to distribute to friends or at local meetings/events
☐ Copy and distribute relevant articles more widely
☐ Contribute financially on a regular basis

Ideally we would like to see Subversion grow and become more effective by joining up with other local active groups following a period of joint discussion and activity. But we recognise that at the present time many individual revolutionaries are fairly isolated. If you're in this situation and you already do most or all of the above list it would be a logical step to consider joining our group. If you live in or within easy travelling distance of Greater Manchester we would urge you to do this. If you live further away the practical benefits of joining would be less but we could still guarantee:
☐ Regular minutes of our meetings
☐ Access to material we receive
☐ Regular contact through letters/phone calls/email
☐ Draft articles for Subversion for comment

In this way you would have more influence on the direction and activity of the group.

Obviously if we had a large influx of individual members like this we would then all have to discuss new ways of organising that would more effectively involve everyone.

So - think about it!

What We Stand For

We meet regularly for political discussion and to organise our activities. The following is a brief description of our basic political principles:

-We are against all forms of capitalism; private, state and self-managed.

- We are for communism, which is a classless society in which all goods are distributed according to needs and desires.

- We are actively opposed to all ideologies which divide the working class, such as religion, sexism and racism.

- We are against all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" movements such as the IRA.

- The working class (wage labourers, the unemployed, housewives, etc.) is the revolutionary class; only its struggle can liberate humanity from scarcity, war and economic crisis.

- Trade unions are part of the capitalist system, selling our labour power to the bosses and sabotaging our struggles. We support independent working class struggle, in all areas of life under capitalism, outside the control of the trade unions and all political parties.

- We totally oppose all capitalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. We are against participation in fronts with these organisations.

- We are against participation in parliamentary elections; we are for the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class and the establishment of organisations of working class power.

- We are against sectarianism, and support principled co-operation among revolutionaries.

- We exist to actively participate in escalating the class war towards communism.

Korea Opportunities

A look at the role of Class and Democracy in the recent events in South Korea

Over December 1996 and into January/February 1997 massive strikes covering nearly all sectors of the South Korean economy - from shipyards and auto-manufacture, through public services to banks and even the stock exchange - were organised by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU). Alongside the strikes there have been large demonstrations of both white collar and manual workers many involving violent clashes with the police.

The objective of the strikers was to overturn legislation rushed through by the ruling New Korea Party which makes sackings and employment of scabs easier and also expands the powers of the state's spy agency.

Enthusiasm for the strikes reflects the recognition by workers of the government's determination to weaken class resistance to attacks on wages and conditions, as this 'Asian Tiger' comes under pressure from newer 'Tiger Cubs' and even an old tiger like Britain where S.E. Asian capital has started to flow back to exploit labour knocked about by the recession here.

The action of workers has also drawn widespread support from other sectors of the population including students, the churches, university professors, journalists, human rights groups, 'citizens' groups and opposition parties.

Some of this support has been carefully and imaginatively encouraged by workers organising free health checks, car services and environmental clean-ups during the strikes. If it were simply a matter of tactical moves to neutralise potential establishment opposition amongst the general population then we needn't worry, but there is more to it than that.

Despite its calls for *international* solidarity the KCTU represents the struggle as one of national democratic renewal in which all "citizens" of the state have an equal interest rather than as it really is, a straightforward clash of class interests which is occurring world-wide irrespective of the political complexion of the national regime.

For instance much has been made by the KCTU of the undemocratic *way* in which legislation was brought forward (in the early hours of the morning with few opposition MPs present). The spectre of a return to South Korea's militaristic and dictatorial past has been raised. The KCTU has been concerned to push itself forward as the true defender of "trade union and labour rights" and to establish itself as the main vendor of labour power against its less representative and establishment oriented rival the FKTU. The KCTU has also made it clear that it is willing to enter into negotiations, alongside opposition parties for "genuine reform of the labour laws".

It is also ironic that the laws being 'defended' have been developed over a period including South Korea's 'undemocratic' past, whilst the present legislative onslaught is being carried out in the 'democratic' present. Indeed the changes are no greater than those long enforced by the 'democratic' west with the acquiescence of the west's free trade unions - the same unions who are now bleating about anti-democratic moves in South Korea!

The NKP has tried to split citizen

(continued on page 3)

South Korea

(continued from page 2)

support for the workers by raising the bogey of clandestine support for the North Korean dictatorship amongst strikers. Whilst this ploy has been rightly laughed off it is not entirely ridiculous in so far as some left wing support for the strikers is couched in terms of a movement for "democracy and reunification of the Korean Peninsula", positing (as the left always does) a diversionary national interest against class interests.

The government's response apart from this has so far been a mixture of repression (police violence and arrest of union organisers) and offers of negotiation which suggests a compromise against the interests of workers may be in the offing. Whatever happens more class confrontation is guaranteed in the near future.

The function of trade unions in the modern world as 'permanent' representatives of labour in the market place leads naturally to their support for legal recognition and a place in the 'democratic' structure of the state. From the workers' perspective the state, whether democratic or dictatorial is always our enemy. There are clear class interests at stake in the current situation in S. Korea but workers need to distinguish these from the democratic aspirations of the unions and political parties.

Footnote: Interestingly some of the 'Tiger Cubs' are having problems of their own. Workers at Sanyo Universal Electric in Bangkok, Thailand, recently set fire to one of the company's warehouses in a dispute over year end bonuses. There have also been militant protests by Bangkok bank workers and by garment workers in Phnom Penh, Cambodia amongst others.

Workers in South East Asia are beginning to take the Tiger by the tail and give it bloody good shake. **More power to their elbow!**

"The dockers are not going away"

The latest in the series of reports written by a communist in Liverpool who has been active in supporting the dockers' struggle

It is now January 1997 as I write and the dockers are sixteen months into their dispute with the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company over that company's summary dismissal of 429 workers and their consequent campaign for reinstatement. Concretely the latest development to report is the dockers proposal to the company to set up a 'labour only' cooperative [to be 45% owned by the dockers themselves] which would control labour conditions - wage rates, hours, overtime etc. So far the company has rejected the proposal, which was to be expected.

I believe the dockers reasons for making such a proposal [and it did come from the docks stewards and not the union] were largely tactical and did not stem from any commitment to the ideal of 'cooperativism' itself whatever that means today. We have enough experience in this country of such forms of organisations to understand that they do not imply any real change of the workers' position in the scheme of things. It was tactical, in my opinion, for several reasons.

Among them, firstly, it got the pressure of the union's demand for a 'secret ballot' over the company's latest 'final' [that is in fact the fourth 'final'] offer off the dockers backs. The dockers policy is as far as possible to keep control of their dispute in their own hands - the union's demand for a secret ballot [and only of former employees of MDHC] would have left around 100 of them disenfranchised and could therefore have split the united front the dockers have shown so far. One of the principles they constantly reiterate is that there will be NO settlement until ALL settle. Undoubtedly the TGWU will come back to insist on a demand for a 'secret ballot'. The dockers ability to resist this is outwith their control for the moment, since there exists no movement independent of the union to which they could turn.

Secondly by introducing a seemingly possible basis for a settlement, it was hoped to isolate the MDHC from the major shipping lines, who were affected by the latest world wide week of action in areas not directly trading with Liverpool, and especially in the Pacific rim where the majority of world trade is now concentrated. Shipping lines are used to dealing with cooperatively or municipally owned ports, so the MDHC could be shown to be an extremely obdurate employer - which no doubt it is. Any dock company that bites the hand of the union that is desperate to extract itself from the situation by handing the dockers bound and gagged over to the tender mercies of the employer is guilty of lack of imagination at best and more probably in MDHC's case, outright stupidity.

Thirdly and I think this is the most revealing, the proposed 'co-op' would have allowed those militants back 'onto the dock' after those dockers near retiring age could have accepted the redundancy and pension terms which are their legal due. How realistic this is given the past sixteen months I leave you to judge, but it does show that for some of the militants there is a major problem in understanding the changed nature of their struggle and the consequences of these changes for their own movement.

Many of the stewards and other activists long to get back to the kind of class struggle they were used to - that of sectional disputes 'on the job'. Alongside others in this dispute, including it must be said some dockers and some stewards, I have argued that things have changed and it is impossible to go back to that kind of

(continued on page 4)

Dockers Struggle *(continued from page 3)*

movement. I argued in my last report that perhaps one of the reasons preventing the appreciation of this reality lay in the very form of organisation adopted by the dockers. All the major questions are debated in private [and these debates have been heated and at times violent] so that a common policy can be laid before the dockers mass meetings.

I am more and more convinced that this way of proceeding is a dead end. It is all very well for individual militants and activists to accept that reality has changed, but such a realisation, such 'consciousness' [how I hate that word] must become the property of the movement itself and not the private property of the 'leadership'. This whole question opens up so many issues that I shall simply have to assert my conclusion for the moment. Even in the supporter's group in Liverpool [I cannot speak for other groups round the country] it is extremely difficult to get individual activists to accept the need to think and consider wider issues - any contemplation for instance, of the possibility of the dockers being defeated is met simply with outright refusal to discuss it.

This brings me on to a consideration of more strategic issues. No-one who has been around this dispute for any length of time can fail to be struck by one thing. And that is the tremendous sense of collectivity, loyalty and practical concern that these people show to one another. Secondly compared with the prevailing 'morality' [I can't think of any other word], what these people have done is perverse. On at least four occasions now they have rejected, what are to many working class people, major sums of money in order simply to continue their struggle. Even in this city with its long history of working class struggle, many people shake their head in disbelief at the dockers continued rejection of the MDHC's cash offer to abandon the campaign.

It is this aspect of the dispute that is so utterly new in my opinion. Right at the beginning of the dispute the stewards were quite frank in saying that they did not have a clear idea of the way forward. They asked people to come forward and make a contribution - some have, many have not. What is quite clear is that no-one has a blueprint or a manual as to how they should proceed. As one of the stewards said 'if there is a manual that shows us how to do things then give us a copy. We'll make another 500 and then distribute them.'

The dockers know that they must make it up as they go along. Some of us here have been involved in that process. If our ideas and suggestions have not been taken up we know it is not because they have not been considered and discussed, but because, for whatever reason they have not seemed practical at the time. Times change, circumstances change, and it may be that the dockers will return to reconsider many of the options which they had previously rejected. One thing is for sure, I do not believe that this dispute will be 'resolved' in the near future, whichever way it turns out. And the dockers for their part are not going away. DG.

Subversion footnote

Some dockers and their supporters *have* questioned the usefulness of the proposal for a workers' co-op or company in solving their current problems and have recognised the potentially diversionary nature of the proposal even as a supposed "tactic" (see the article 'Bollocks to Clause Four' in *Subversion* 16). There has also been some discussion of the need for dockers to use their collective organisation and experience to both protect themselves against the attacks of the state on their social benefits (including the effects of the JSA etc) and act as a potential catalyst for action by other unemployed workers.

Green Communism

The following text is a revised version of a talk given at a Subversion discussion meeting held in Manchester. The title was "Green Communism? - aspects of social transformation". This article represents a point of view within Subversion on issues which we are continuing to discuss and which we will return to again in future issues.

In the early 1970s I joined an organisation called the Socialist Party of Great Britain. It had and still has many faults, but there are two aspects of those early politics of mine that I want to pick up on.

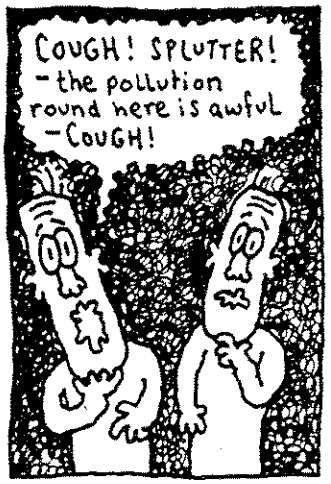
Firstly the positive side. The great strength of the SPGB was, and is, a very clear understanding of the basis of capitalism and similarly an understanding of what communism could be. Those are ideas that I have held since those days. So when I talk about communism, what do I mean? Well, I start from an understanding that capitalism is not dependent on private or any other formal legalised ownership of property. The basis of capitalism lies in the control of the means of production and distribution by a minority, and the exclusion from that control of a majority. The majority are then forced to work for the minority. To do so they sell their ability to work to the minority, the ruling class. In return they receive sufficient money (wages/salaries) to keep them in the standard of living to which they are broadly accustomed. This never equals the value that they produce when they are working for the ruling class. Thus the majority, what we call the working class, are exploited. In modern society it is futile to try and see who is exploited and by how much. Capitalism has evolved to the point where we are exploited collectively as a class. What we produce as a class is sold at its value on a market. At this point, surplus value, or what we usually refer to as profit, is realised collectively by the ruling class. So their whole position of wealth and power derives from production for profit, exchange and the wages system.

Communism is the negation of these fundamental laws of capitalism. It involves social control of the means of production and distribution, production for use - because things are needed - and the abolition of wages and the whole money system of buying and selling. People will freely associate together to produce and will freely take from the common store according to their needs.

To survive, to regulate itself, capitalism utilises the state. This is an instrument not only to regulate production, distribution and exchange, but also to defend the control by the minority over the majority. The state has existed in various forms as long as class society has existed. At every stage of class society it has existed to support the minority in power over the majority. It follows that communism will only exist when we have got rid of the state, for we will then have no minority whose position needs defending. The actual process of establishing communism will involve the destruction of the state.

We dreamt of communism as a kind of science fiction society much like Star Trek portrays to this day...

There is one negative aspect of those politics that I want to talk about. Along with many others in the movement at that time I held a view of communism as technology triumphant. We believed that communism would base itself on the technology of existing, capitalist, society. Thus, we would have unlimited power - from nuclear power or we believed from non-polluting nuclear fusion. Everything possible would be mechanised, freeing people for a life of leisure. Freed from pollution (weren't we naive!), industry would produce an



abundance of all the things that people could want. True, production would no longer rely on built-in obsolescence - things would be made to last and consumer durables would be shared. Nonetheless, it wouldn't be too much of a caricature to say that for many of us then, communism was dreamed of as a kind of science fiction society much like Star Trek portrays to this day.

All this ignored one thing. That was the nature of capitalist technology. Capitalism is a society with another basic law. That is expand or die. All businesses have this imperative. They must constantly be searching for ways to produce more and cheaper, to compensate for the tendency of the profit produced on individual items to decline and to steal a march over their competitors. So, capitalism constantly seeks to replace living labour (people) with dead labour (machines), to increase the amount produced by individual workers and screw more surplus value out of them. As a result it increases the level of production and is constantly searching for new markets. It is this search for new markets that has led to this increasing domination of every aspect of our lives by commodities. It is the reason behind such essentially useless commodities as Walkmen and Gameboys - essentially anti-social artifacts that isolate us from our fellows. It is the reason behind the

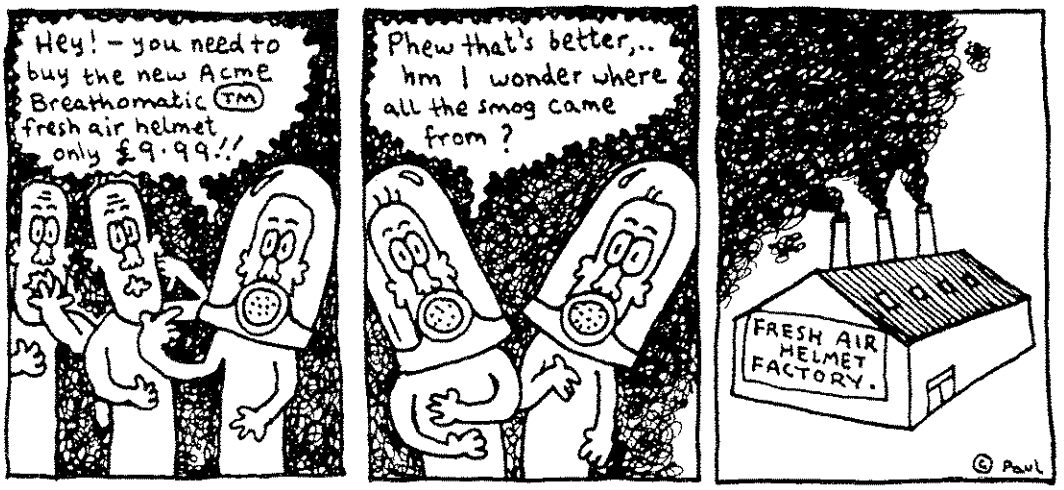
(continued on page 6)

Green Communism *(from page 5)*

commodification of children's lives.

The technology of capitalism was created to aid this process. They call it progress. Pre-capitalist societies hardly changed their technologies from century to century. For a thousand years, the greatest advance in military technology was the invention of the stirrup - the Romans conquered most of Europe without the aid of it. Gunpowder was known of for hundreds of years before anyone saw any military advantage in it. Clocks took hundreds of years to become widely used. The list goes on. Today, we live in a society where change of even more fundamental natures happens several times within our own lifetimes. As I am writing this I am using a computer and listening to a CD. Just 20 years ago, knowledgeable insiders were speculating that computers might one day come down in price to around £5000! A modern American car has more computer power than the first Apollo spaceship to land on the Moon.

Today both science and technology are fully integrated into capitalist society. Science is the last, but after human labour, the most important social property to be turned into an adjunct of capitalism. The story of its conversion from the province of amateurs, philosophers, tinkerers and seekers after knowledge, to its present highly organised and lavishly financed form is the story of its incorporation into capitalist industry. The kind of technology that emerges from this alliance is one which, when applied to the work process, is spurred on by the need to remove control of that process from the workers. The consequence of this is known as "deskilling". Technology is designed to centralise control in the hands of managers and engineers reducing the amount of understanding of it needed on the part of the workers. This, together with the application of science to the management of the work process (sometimes called Taylorism) where every bodily motion is classified and timed, eliminating time spent "inefficiently" and reducing contacts between workers, has led quite literally and systematically to the exploitation of people as cheap and interchangeable parts of machines.


Hey! - you need to buy the new Acme Breathomatic (TM) fresh air helmet only £9.99!!
Phew that's better,.. hm I wonder where all the smog came from ?
FRESH AIR HELMET FACTORY.
© Paul

There can be no future for our species if the damage capitalism brings is not halted.

One thing that's clear is that technology and science are not independent variables in history but social forces which adapt themselves to the needs and exigencies of capitalism. Furthermore the imperatives behind technology to control us are no longer confined merely to the workplace. The application of science to organise our 'leisure time' as consumers (with theme parks like Alton Towers etc) is a growth industry.

In the last twenty years or so, capitalism has created a new movement of opposition - often called the 'environmental movement'. This is simply because it has so messed up the world that many of us can see that there can be no future for our species if the damage it brings is not halted.

This movement can take a number of directions. Capitalism would like it to head in the direction of self-imposed austerity. Working people gladly accepting cut-backs - to save the planet! (While the bosses continue to live in luxury). Or working class people in the North blaming poor people in the South - for destroying rain forests for example. Or more subtly, for working people in the North to blame themselves for being part of a society that forces poor people in the South to destroy rain forests! It likes us to be green consumers - buying Ecover products because that way we avoid guilt for the destruction of the planet - meanwhile, of course, spending more for the things we need - preferably at Tesco's or Sainsbury's, but feeling oh so good and sanctimonious about it.

Alternatively, those parts of the 'green movement' that are actively resisting capital can be revolutionary. They can recognise that the cause of environmental destruction is the very imperative of capital to expand or die. To recognise that it is the very existence of the buying and selling culture that causes the destruction we so abhor.

Now, capital has many strategies to recuperate the struggle against it. It deploys any number against the environmental movement. One of these is to attack from within the movement itself. In this it finds willing allies in the likes of the Green Party and Friends of the Earth. More alarmingly, it finds allies in some of those who claim to be anarchists.

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Green Communism

(continued from page 6)

Over recent years there has developed a tendency, calling itself anarchist, who have fallen for the lies of capitalism hook, line and sinker. Capital would like us to think that the problem does not lie in the control of production or the existence of wage labour. Rather we have constant talk about the dangers of technology - usually foreign technology, like clever japanese with their computers and robots putting our workers out of jobs.

Latching onto this, not recognising that particular technologies are the product of particular societies, have arisen a new brand of anti-technological anarchists. The most obvious examples of these are grouped around journals like Green Anarchist. Recently they published an extract from the Unabomber's Manifesto (and distribute it in full) - in this he rambles on about technology being the problem. The need is, he said, to get rid of technology. Not technology as it exists in capitalism, but all technology. This view is supported by the likes of John Zerzan who asserts that humanity was better off when it was primitive - he says, for example "Prior to agriculture, in other words, humanity existed in a state of grace, ease and communion with nature that we can barely comprehend today". He wants to go back to that state. (I can only echo the view of Murray Bookchin, who asserted that at least one benefit from the kind of non-society Zerzan envisaged was that nobody would be able to read the crap he wrote!).

They talk about being anti-civilisation.

Green Anarchist say that the problem is "mass society". They say "it is too complex to work without specialisation". They go on to suggest that "mass society must be replaced with communities small enough for each person in them to be respected as an autonomous individual." They say "mass society alienates people from earth. By controlling the Earth's resources, the state controls society. We must end our dependence on the state by taking back the land and living self-sufficiently". They advocate a revolution (?) by landless people in the south because when they take back the land, "less resources [will be] imported from the Third World [and] mass society won't be able to come up with the goods in this society." Their strategy for change here is as follows:

"*We must support the revolution on the periphery by making our own here. We must share skills needed to survive without the State, create a culture of resistance to free us from the alienation of mass society, live free of exploitation by boycotting banks and multinationals, building an alternative economy and defending ourselves and the Earth by taking direct action against military bases and labs, developers and industry, exploitation and bigotry.*" ('Autonomy Now', part of their article "This Is Green Anarchism").

There are many problems with this approach. Firstly, it ignores the fact that environmental destruction is not new to capitalism. Their much-vaunted wild human beings were responsible for burning and clearing vast tracts of the world's forests. Australia is a case in point. Capitalism is just much better and faster at it. Secondly, it offers little more than saying - go and live in communes, farm a few poxy bits of land, wait for millions to starve after the peasant south have taken control of 'their' land, whilst boycotting banks and getting involved in LETS schemes.

By getting rid of useless work, by escaping the cash economy, we will be able to produce enough to feed, clothe and house the planet's population.

This is, of course, just another example of militant, liberal reformism.

The problem with militant reformism is that it fails to tackle the underlying reality of capitalism - that it is based on buying, selling and hence profit. It fails to recognise that it was from small scale production that modern capital grew - spurred on by the needs of capital to expand or die.

A while ago, I asserted that the green movement could take on a revolutionary character. Why? Because the destruction of the environment is the result, not of civilisation, not of technology, but of the domination of the planet by capital. No society has destroyed so quickly or efficiently. No society has exploited

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Green Communism

(continued from page 7)

nature so ruthlessly or with such disregard for the consequences. At least when the indigenous people of australia were destroying the forests, they weren't aware of the long-term results of what they were doing.

Now we see corporations destroying vast areas of rain forests. We see roads ripping up mile upon mile of countryside and polluting the air we breath. We see the food we eat being mixed with all sorts of additives, farmed with fertilisers and pesticides, animals pumped full of hormones, genetically engineered foods being forced on us. In the past 100 years, 250,000 people in Britain have been killed in auto accidents. Yet more cars and roads are built. Countries in the south are indebted to the West, forced to farm for the market, in order to pay for the debts they owe. Millions die each year, killed by poverty and starvation that would be avoided without these debts. Vast areas of the world are polluted by oil companies.

Capitalists and the State don't do these things because they are nasty people. Though of course it is quite likely that many of them are evil bastards! They do it because it is necessary for their system to survive.

So when we struggle against the effects of capital's destruction of the environment, we are struggling against capital itself. We are, actually, engaging in acts of class struggle. These can only succeed when they merge into a struggle to get rid of the system that causes them in the first place.

This is what frightened the state so much over the Reclaim The Streets action in Liverpool. Dockers and eco-activists seeing their struggle united and one! It's hardly surprising the police attacked the eco's with such ferocity.

As communists, we have much to learn from this movement. Not least, it reminds us of the true nature of technology. It reminds us that technology is not neutral. It reminds us that any society must count the ecological impact of any decisions it makes. There is truth in the idea that regions of the planet should be as self-sustainable as possible.

It is just not conceivable that a communist society could base its transport on the mass use of individual motor cars. It doesn't matter whether they be petrol driven or some green alternative. The sheer quantity of power and raw materials involved would continue to be destructive, whether they be petrol or electric. Neither is it conceivable that there would be an obsession with travelling as quickly as possible. It is only the needs of capital that dictate that we have to get from here to there by yesterday. It is likely that we would try to be self sustaining, and where we cannot be, that food and other resources be transported the shortest distance possible. As a result it would suggest a move towards vegetarianism and the end of strawberries in the winter and flowers flown in from Zimbabwe.

We cannot conceive of cities going - overnight or possibly ever. But we can conceive of greening them. Of planting trees, of breaking them down into more human size, of reducing the power of the centre. We can conceive of people choosing to live in smaller communities where they can know and support each other.

Will technology go? Will we return to the wild? Hardly. We have no wish to see a return to backbreaking labour, a continuation of the ridiculous number of hours we work. However, any technology a green communism chose to use would have to be long lasting and designed not to pollute, not to destroy. It would tend to be smaller scale and more manageable, less reliant on specialists. By getting rid of useless work, by escaping the cash economy, we will be able to produce enough to feed, clothe and house the planet's population. To provide enough of what people really need, rather than artificially produced wants. For all to live a life that is worthwhile, freed from the fears that surround us today.

Then we could see a new kind of progress. A progress towards a real human society, where we live in harmony with the planet and can begin to restore it from the destruction wrought in the past.

Note: I was greatly helped in writing this by reading two recent publications from AK Press. They are *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm?* by Murray Bookchin (£5.95) and *Eco-Fascism: Lessons from the German Experience* by Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier (£4.95). Available from AK Press, PO Box 12766, Edinburgh, EH8 9YE, Scotland.

CONSERVE ENERGY

BURN A BUREAUCRAT

Subversion/ACF Joint 'Day School'

Subversion and the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF) are jointly organising a day-long discussion meeting for members and close contacts of the two groups, to talk about various topics arising from the general theme of "Beyond Democracy: For Revolution and the Future Society". The meeting will take place in Central England on Saturday, 7th June. If you are interested in coming to this meeting, drop us a line for more information. It will be possible to provide a creche, so if you would like to bring children along, please ask for a creche registration form as well.

For those of you thinking about getting a job...

A Modest Suggestion Regarding The Targetting Of Key Economic Sectors By Troublemaking Types

This article expresses the thoughts of one member of Subversion and is not to be taken as a kind of "Subversion group policy". [There was some discussion within the group before publishing this article. We decided to publish it, but also to add a number of points, reflecting the discussions that took place, at the end].

By the clumsy term "key economic sectors" I simply mean jobs where workers appear to have a continuing, or burgeoning, collectively confrontational role with their bosses. Of course, highpoints in class struggle are always shifting (slowly or suddenly), but it should be apparent, to those who care to look, which jobs are likely to put one closer to industrial action. (If we had one revolutionary postie in every town...)

The bosses and the State would rather we used our skills and insights as social workers, personnel officers, managers, academics, designers, programmers and experts than as shit-stirrers on the shop floor. There must be a lesson for us in this.

"*The lowest ebb* [of the situationist project of the 1960's and early 1970's] *has been an intellectualized reading born of the inability of a large number of people to destroy what can only be destroyed (through sabotage and subversion - not occupations) by the workers responsible for the economy's key sectors.*" R. Vaneigem, **The Revolution of Everyday Life**, reprinted 1983, p.214.

"*Those who already feel the need for communism, and discuss it, cannot interfere in [...] struggles to bring the communist gospel, to propose to these limited actions that they direct themselves towards 'real' communist activity. What is needed is not slogans, but an explanation of the background and mechanism of these struggles. One must only show* what they will be forced to do. *This cannot be done without participation in such movements whenever this is possible, though not by wasting one's time.*" J. Barrot, **What Is Communism**, reprinted 1983, p.39.

"*Scientists and the like have to* think *for their bosses, they have to* work out the ways *that profit is to be made and control maintained. They are not forced to do this, they could always get a job in a restaurant.*" **Proletarian Gob**, #6, p. 6.

I find it an increasingly sad fact that most of the radical milieu with whom I have a passing acquaintance in Britain, and in whom I find the most intelligent criticisms of this society, do not have what may be termed "crap working class" jobs.

Instead (if they are not idling comfortably as "claimants"! - I'll come back to this sector later) they have fairly cushy well-paid and what some would term "middle-class" jobs. Now, it is **not** the *cushiness* or the *pay* that I have an objection to, it is the fact that the jobs themselves mean that the radical person in question has, at the daily point of the production of value, little or no contact with the very strata (roughly speaking) of the population that we are relying on to kick out capitalist economics.

If we want to help workers wake up to the systematic misery of their exploitation, and to do something about it then it seems fairly logical that we have to be amongst them. This approach, of course, entails looking for the sort of job in which one might have the most influence and in which there seems a good potential for ongoing class struggle (i.e. look for a job where you have a good contact with other workers on the same level of pay as you and where there is a history of troublemaking by those workers).

Of course the problem with working in these sort of jobs is that it is not usually as pleasant as whiling your day away at a computer terminal, or wandering through the halls of academia, or supervising things in an office, or doing something "meaningful and worthy" on behalf of the local state for the poor and distressed of your borough. The problem, perhaps, is that some radical types are just too well educated! And they just can't resist letting their brains and initiative being picked by a well-paying boss who guarantees that they won't have to get their hands dirty.

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Thinking About getting A Job?
(continued from page 9)
Now, I'm not going to blame anyone for wanting to get out of "crap" low-paid jobs and into something easier and that will give you a better standard of living. This is not the point I'm trying to make. What bothers me is that the most radical critics of this society are often not in any position to have any impact on the working class. Added to this, of course, is that they often end up, through their job, putting a large part of their **creativity** (as opposed to just **time**) at the service of the administrators and managers of this society. This fact can be rationalised and justified no end but it is still a fact.

One false impediment many radicals might use to their getting "crap" jobs is that they are overqualified and already have a job history that would exclude them from most "crap" jobs. However, this can be overcome by **lying**, job histories and education are not looked into by employers as much as you might think it is. If you're unhappy with unsupported lies get a couple of references off a dodgy builder or cowboy cleaning firm, taxi firm, etc - use your imagination. If you are worried, with your posh accent and all, that you'd never be accepted by other low-paid workers you needn't be - you'll soon discover the amazing variety of backgrounds of the people you'll be working with, and anyway there is no need to tell them that you have a PhD in Nuclear Physics or whatever.

Most importantly, at your job on the railways or Royal Mail or wherever, you will learn so much about the class struggle it will make your head hurt. You will see things differently, things you thought were straight-forward will become more complex and things that were once shrouded in fog in your head will become clear. Your new *non*-career will engender a lot of serious and independent thought on your part, you will learn about what the awareness of ***subordination*** does to you and others and you will learn about your complete and utter ***expendability***. Of course, you will have to have at your disposal an open mind, in this regard the reading of a few fiction books by B. Traven probably wouldn't go amiss.

Apart from those comrades who are in work there are the ones who aren't at all. Being unemployed is also not an ideal way to be amongst the "key sectors" of our class. Naturally, in some geographical areas getting a job is extremely difficult, but this is not the case everywhere. I don't blame people for trying to avoid getting a job, I've done it for long periods in the past too. Used wisely, the amount of "free" time that can be gained from not working can be used to involve oneself deeply in unemployed struggles, squatting, and general propaganda work. However, anyone with two short planks to rub together is aware that the unemployed are not a powerful sector of the working class, they usually have no labour to withdraw - this may change with workfare though! - and the difficulty this sector has in defending itself and making concrete demands is legendary.

So, what I'm saying is that it might be a good idea to put it about that getting a job in an industry which has the potential to "hold the country to ransom" is a good idea. The logical extension of this idea of ***targetting industries that we think are important to the class struggle*** is also targetting areas of the *world* in which class struggle is escalating, S.E. Asia, or Brazil, for example. Getting a job as a car worker in S. Korea might be a bit too difficult to achieve though - let's not go to extremes!

The above suggestions are *not* born out of any "Lord high and mighty", misplaced moral highground, "I'm better than you because I was born in a council estate and the cops once looked at us", type of self-justifying whingebaggery. Neither am I jealous of anyone. I'm not advocating any sort of "immersion" in "working class culture", to the extent where you pick what you think is an absolutely true and honest working class lifestyle and try to live it. I'm **just** saying that maybe we should try getting jobs in industries that we think are most important to the class struggle.

I might also be accused of "workerism". If people want to justify their non-acceptance of the above text by labelling it "workerist" then so be it. For me it will only prove that these people have little understanding of the class struggle and its essential role in our future liberation.

"*The organization of insurgent workers - the only revolutionary organization needed henceforward - must be the work of the insurgent workers themselves.*" R. Vaneigem.

Further reading:
Postie article in issue 20 of *Subversion*.
All previous stuff on *class* in *Subversion*.
Communist Headache, especially Volume 5, available for large SAE from C. H., c/o ATX, PO Box 298, Sheffield S10 1YU.

Some comments

1. Although some members of the group have disagreements of a serious nature with the article, nonetheless we feel that it is a useful starting point for a debate.

2. We all feel that revolutionaries should seriously consider all the implications of a job before taking it. It is not enough to merely state that we need the money. However, we are not all sure what makes a particular sector a key one or not. This changes as the years go by. Further, once you get trapped in a job, and have made decisions to raise families or get sucked into the housebuying trap, for example, it becomes difficult to move from one job to another. Undoubtedly there are other reasons which make changing jobs difficult.

3. We feel that a revolutionary group should represent all sectors of the working class. At the moment, when groups are small, it is inevitable that they reflect a very small cross-section of the class. Should they ever get bigger, we would hope that they would not be restricted to just blue-collar workers and would be horrified if they were only made up of post-university types in white-collar jobs.

letters

Dear Subversion,

Regards the JSA and all that, here are a few points I would like to add.

Claimants are not the same thing as workers who are unemployed, and not all claimants are necessarily working class. To the contrary, in areas like Brighton or London quite a large number of claimants are middle class. Claimants do not struggle they just make claims, just like commuters do not struggle they just commute and TV viewers do not struggle they just consume TV. It is proletarians who struggle (in the social revolutionary sense of the word struggle). The term "claimant", like "commuter" or "TV viewer", is a term that integrates individuals into a capitalist citizen role under the system while concealing class differences and contradictions. It is unemployed proletarians we should be interested in rather than "claimants".

Also, to focus primarily on the JSA is in practise a nationalistic approach, even if this is not consciously intentional. It delineates struggle around the specific technicalities of the national bureaucracy only. Maybe this has to do with a continuing patriotic sentimental attachment to the british imperial welfare state. This immediately cuts the struggle up and undermines the possibilities for internationalism. The JSA doesn't necessarily mean a thing to unemployed proletarians in Los Angeles or Paris or Johannesburg or Seoul or Mexico City. But things like casualisation and workfare and prison labour are immediately international things for proletarians in many parts of the world. Why therefore an insistence on focussing so heavily on "claimant" issues and the "JSA" by people like groundswell and brighton autonomists?

If unemployed workers are to coalesce and fuse together with other workers in struggle, it is a thousand times more important for them to do so with workers like the dockers and their community or striking transport workers or prison work strikers than to waste time with the complete red herring and diversion of linking claimants to civil servants. Indeed the process of subordinating the struggles of unemployed proletarians to "claimant" activism and campaigns and then subordinating these campaigns in a verticalist and corporatist way to the narrow sectionalist demands of their immediate supervisors in the bureaucracy's chain of command (dole officers) is the surest way of keeping unemployed proletarians isolated and weak.

Yours for social revolt, P (Reading)

Reply

We are not sure about P's use of the term "middle class", which is often used to describe people who are simply white collar workers. Most "claimants" are people who would ordinarily have no access to the means of existence except through selling their labour power for a wage or salary, which defines them as working class at least in economic terms, if not in a revolutonary sense. Workers, waged or unwaged, need to go beyond the categories of their job, or identification as "claimants" or "consumers", to identify as a class with common interests against the whole capitalist system. But this is not just a matter of language. It is something that can only be forged through practical struggle.

Many groups may call themselves "anti-JSA", since this is what spurred the present round of resistance, but this doesn't automatically restrict them to a narrow (potentially reformist) outlook. Some of the groups, including many involved in the Groundswell network, have recognised their common interests with, for example, the French unemployed workers who recently occupied "dole" offices in France, or the Liverpool dockers fighting casualisation. In this last instance they have made useful contacts and engaged in joint acivity.

We in Subversion would not suggest that any section of the working class should "subordinate" its struggle to the struggle of any other section. We support attempts by unemployed workers and dole office workers to fight together where this is practical, but agree that it is important not to prioritise this over linking with other workers in struggle.

letters *continued*

Starting here and continuing over the next three pages we are publishing an exchange of letters with a member of London Class War, on the subject of our opposition to "national liberation" movements and the IRA in particular.

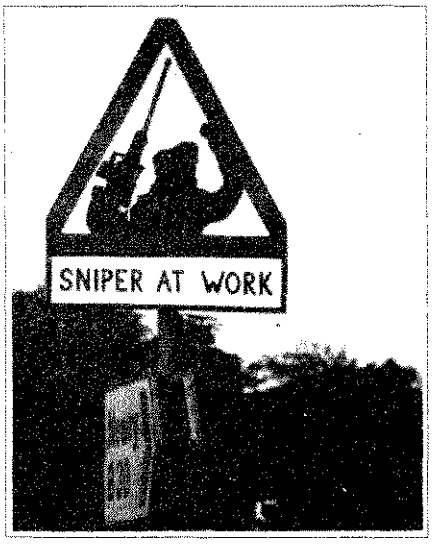
Open Letter To Subversion

Subversion: you can't tell the difference between tactical interventions in the working class i.e. the Class War paper, & our political beliefs. You also try to grossly simplify a really complicated situation, & never attempt to see any positive actions (in e.g. the IRA) because this upsets your ideological purity. You also never comment on loyalism & its loyalty to the British capitalist state. For example during the recent wave of riots loyalist mobs were attacking working class catholic areas with UVF gunmen for safety. The word got back to the boys (IRA) & out came the rifles & the loyalist mob was taken out of the area. The IRA recently historically armed because of this very reason in the late 1960s. So, we see that the working class are at least part of the IRA & also call on it for support in certain situations. What would Subversion suggest doing in the situation above on the streets of Belfast? Call the IRA "murdering scum" like you have before? Excuse me while I laugh.

Not being personally clued up on the nature of the entire republican movement I dare say there may be some "bourgeois nationalists" in it, but the ruling classes will split in any revolutionary situation. The IRA is a broad church (a bit like Class War) & it is unrealistic to condemn it or write off the militants within it as you do. At its core Class War supports "independent action by the working class for its own, independent class interests" but also realises that social life is complicated & that interventions must be made on a realistic basis. We do not support counter revolutionaries ever. What we do support is working class people defending themselves & their communities by whatever means they see fit & realisable, & offer conditional support to working class people in struggle everywhere. "Cool" is a euphemism for "conditional support", & we don't print stuff like you write because it has no relevance to people's daily lives in war torn Belfast. In an individual capacity, DC (a member of London Class War)

Subversion Reply

1) If you say something for "tactical" reasons that is not what you actually believe, then this is lying to the working class, the sort of thing we expect from Trots and Stalinists and is absolutely unacceptable for revolutionaries.



2) It doesn't add anything to the debate to accuse us of "ideological purity" simply because we disagree about something, or because we think an issue is more crucial than you do. For instance, if there was a radical organisation around that believed in supporting the British Army (or maybe had some people who supported it and some who didn't) you would condemn such a view without hesitation, as we would. You would not be impressed by the argument that this was a tactical question, and that you should abandon your "ideological purity".

In Subversion, we firmly believe that the IRA is every bit as reactionary as the British State and its army. We see no difference in supporting either of them. It's just that one of them has the support of the Left for its anti-working class programme. This is no different from supporting the Bolsheviks against Kerensky, or Labour against the Tories.

This is the crucial question that we disagree on, and if we are right, then this is clearly a *major issue* dividing a revolutionary position from a counter-revolutionary one - not a question of "obscure pedantry" or "ideological purity", so you can't logically accuse us of that as part of your argument, only as part of your conclusion, which you have to establish beforehand by *concrete argument.*

3) We don't write about the Loyalists for the same reason we don't write about the Tories - our readership is highly unlikely to include closet Tories or Loyalists, and we don't want to waste time preaching to the converted. Our readership does, however, include some people who are at least partially sympathetic to Labour, and to Irish Republicanism, so these are important issues to tackle.

4) In a situation of wholesale sectarian division like Northern Ireland, working-class people will often in desperation find themselves forced to turn to the paramilitary power of "their" community for self-defence - this is just as true of Protestant workers relying on Loyalist paramilitaries as it is of Catholics relying on Republican ones, so in itself this is not an argument that the IRA is different from the UVF etc. Similarly, most working class people in Britain, when faced with anti-social attacks by e.g. burglars, muggers or rapists, would turn to the Police for (the vain hope of) protection. In all of these cases it is the apparent absence of an alternative that makes people seek help from those quarters - but none of this means that those bodies are not anti-working class.

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letters *continued*

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5) The working class is most certainly not "part of the IRA". It is a wholly bourgeois organisation. It is NOT a "broad church". The fact that members may come from a working class background does not change this, otherwise we would have to say that at least some fascist organisations, not to mention the Armed Forces of many countries, were working class organisations!

What determines the class nature of any organisation is its political nature, i.e. what its programme is, what it is striving for. The IRA, like all other national liberation movements in the world, aims at a capitalist society, differing from their enemies only in where the borders are going to be, or which faction of capitalism is going to be calling the shots in "their" territory.

6) The ruling classes will NOT split in a revolutionary situation. Far from it - it is in periods of class peace that factional differences within the ruling class have greater expression; when the capitalists feel their very existence is under threat, they will forget their internal quarrels and unite against the working class.

7) You say that although you support class action for class interests, life is "complicated" and we must be "realistic". Such talk is the age-old language of opportunism, behind which countless former revolutionaries have betrayed their class and ended up supporting the vilest, bloodiest reaction. You are on a slippery slope.

8) You say you don't ever support counter-revolutionaries and in the very next paragraph admit that you give "conditional support" to those vile capitalist scum, the "cool" FLN of Algeria.

You need to think about what it means to give "conditional support" to the kind of political movement which has oppressed and slaughtered members of our class in country after country around the world.

To conclude:

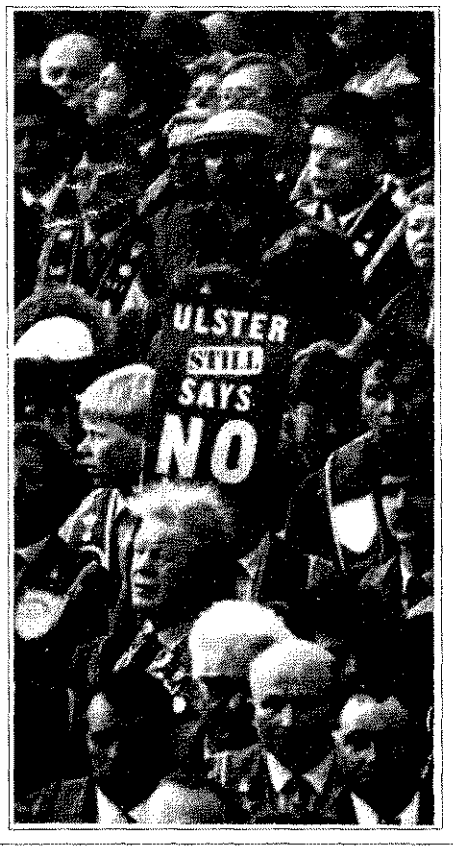
People like Mandela, Arafat, Ho Chi Minh, Gerry Adams, you name it, have been prevented by the particular circumstances in those countries from using electoral means to achieve their aims. So they have had to use military means - to achieve REFORMIST objectives.

You can see clearly enough that the opposition of parties such as Labour is merely Tweedledum aiming to replace Tweedledee. But you are easily suckered by parties and organisations whose ONLY difference is that they use guns and bombs to achieve similar ends.

Stop looking at their guns and take a look at their politics. Then you might wise up to the fact that these bastards are our class enemy.

Reply To Subversion

Hello again, thanks for the reply but you did not answer my other questions about prisons, crime & football hooliganism (not an abstract question



of support for all hooligans, but a look at the good things some hooligans do). To get to your points on Ireland. I used "IDEOLOGICAL PURITY" to summarise many points. I will develop these here below. When I said "tactical reasons" this meant that we do not believe in writing people off before finding out what the real conditions are like. You do not get into people's real worlds by being an outsider & that is what Subversion are doing. For you to say that we should only be "pure revolutionaries" puts you into a fantasy realm of separation from concrete struggles. & also means that we would have to question things like signing on because it implies support for the capitalist state!

You mentioned that the IRA have an "anti working class programme". Where is it & what does it consist of, or are you implying it (making it up)? If all members of the IRA would agree on one, I would be surprised. Also, do you really believe the IRA has a chance of establishing itself to become a government in a united Ireland (because this appears to be the logic of your position). Given the huge dominance of the British state this appears unlikely unless in a period of a highly intensified class struggle in England, Scotland & Wales we can force the ruling class with its imperialist mind set to get out of Ireland. If so, I would imagine that revolutionary fervour would have gripped the Irish population so it would not tolerate authoritarian government (or any government).

A revolutionary position recognises the legacy of 300 years of British imperialism & the necessity of entering into debate with the oppressed. Our intervention is designed to find out what are the possibilities given the historical reality of imperialist oppression. You still refuse to talk about loyalism & its scabby loyalty to the British capitalist state. What a perverse logic you have. You assume your readers like the IRA (god knows why given your record), & you refuse to talk about the transplanted loyalists & their political beliefs & allegiances.

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letters *continued*

(from page 13)

So we have it complete. You've no strategy & no full political discussion (& possibly indirectly a hatred of working class Catholics). By not looking at the British capitalist state's imperialist history YOU CAN SAFELY ignore loyalism's allegiance to the anti working class (Catholic) ideology of the British state. You do not distinguish between what sort of actions are the ones we would support in response to the violence by the British state. I find your emotive language to be amusing because you are obviously would be intellectuals with elitist views who have found themselves a niche. From your safe little homes you deny 300 years of Imperialist history, intervention or research into the resistance in the North of Ireland. What's more, YOU are not interested.

If Germany had won World War 2 & we were subject to imperialist occupation, & we had managed to get a huge bomb to go off in the financial heart of Berlin. Would you be happy? I know I would. I know it is not working class self activity on a mass scale, but imperialist occupations do create exceptional situations. WHAT ARE the actions you would support against the next example of British Imperialist aggressions that always lead to working class catholic deaths or injury? OR DO YOU DENY THE OPPRESSED THE RIGHT TO RESIST? It is not that we are gun worshippers, but it is the concrete actions of the working class to Imperialist aggression on a mass level from which we draw our respect for these people e.g. Free Derry, & the widespread rioting this year. Now you have no respect & do not want to consider the concrete reality of life in the North of Ireland. What you present is a picture of "IRA Scum" in an abstract, ahistorical (without history) manner. Quite like that presented by the British media, & this is not a Marxist or Anarchist position (so who are you?).

In answering your point 5 you say that

"the class nature of any organisation is its political nature". However, you have only to look at a a lot of "revolutionary groups" to see that this is not true. Middle class people who are in a "revolutionary working class organisation" have been one of the greatest barriers to revolution because REAL working class people can see them to be the fraud they are. Therefore it is the class composition of the organisation, plus its political programme which determines the class nature of any organisation. I happen to recognise that working class people make a lot of ideological choices. Unfortunately, a lot join the police, or are born into loyalism, or form many armies around the world. But this does not alter the fact that continued allegiance to the British capitalist state (or any state) makes them the enemy of the revolutionary working class in whichever country. It is time that a lot of people realised that working class people carry with them a lot of ideological beliefs which inform the decisions they make. Often you have only got to look at your own family to see that this is true. The loyalist working class have chosen to ensure their relative economic dominance by continued allegiance to the British state, a bit like scabbing.

Our "conditional support" does not mean we support the slaughtering of our class & it's crass ignorance & stupidity to assert that it does. Generally, "cool" as a word meaning "conditional support" means we respect the initiatives taken towards self management & violent resistance e.g. to the Imperialist capitalist British state (or any other state). Mainly by the people, & not their political leadership. This is not "opportunistic", but is designed to discover what is the real meaning in real conditions for the people concerned & what is the potential for revolution. This is the real strategy of liberation. What you are advocating is a type of ultra left imperialism whereby you indirectly end up supporting the British state, it is Subversion who are on the slippery slope.

DC (London Class War)

Subversion Reply

1) The phrase "pure revolutionaries" is yours, not ours. We DO NOT believe in separating ourselves from concrete struggles, but we support ONLY the concrete struggles of the working class, fighting for working class interests. The IRA is a capitalist force fighting to maintain the slavery of our class under new bosses. What you are doing is supporting an anti-working class proto-state in the name of being "tactical" - this just underlines the points we made about opportunism in the first reply.

2) Sinn Fein published their programme (Eire Nua) long ago. Besides, even if you haven't read it, you can't seriously doubt that the Republican Movement is nationalist. It hardly matters if they disagree about this or that detail. So do Labour, or the Tories, about their own programmes. Your problem is that you don't think nationalism per se is counter-revolutionary.

(continued on page 15)

letters *continued*

(from page 14)

3) As to whether the IRA has a chance of coming to power, this is indeed extremely unlikely, but so what? After all, we agree that Fascism should be opposed even though Fascist groups in Britain have even less chance of ever coming to power. The point about revolutionary fervour preventing an authoritarian government coming to power is clearly not true, because there have been many "revolutions" of the sort dominated by nationalist ideas such as the IRA's and authoritarian "revolutionary" governments are the norm as a result. Even more radical upsurges, involving a major element of independent class struggle, such as the Russian Revolution, give little grounds for complaisancy. The Bolshevik party was far more plausible in its radicalness than the Republican Movement (which is why even many Anarchists joined it during the revolution) and yet we all know that Lenin's government created a brutal state-capitalist regime almost unrivalled in its savagery.

4)There's little to add about Loyalism except that you yourself are an example of one of our readers who is soft on Republicanism - we have yet to see any evidence of Loyalist sympathisers among our readership. As to the point about us hating working class Catholics (a contemptible remark) it is perhaps worth pointing out that I myself, the author of these two responses plus our original Open Letter, am a working-class, part-Irish, Catholic (by upbringing).

5) The points about Germany are a dead giveaway. The logic of one form of nationalism does indeed lead onto other forms! You admit that if Germany had won the war you would support Britain! For the record, no we most certainly WOULD NOT support British bombing of Germany, regardless of whether the German ruling class dominated Britain. We repeat: we ONLY support struggles of the working class (regardless of country) against the ruling class (regardless of country).

6) When you "define" the Marxist and Anarchist positions and say "who are you?" you give a good illustration of why we disdain labels. They encourage people to put everyone in neat categories or boxes that can be dismissed without actually listening to what they are really saying. We have never claimed to be Marxist or Anarchist, and if that means people find it harder to put a neat label on us, tough. (For a good summary of what in Subversion's view distinguishes revolutionaries from the Left (in all its varieties), see the article "The Revolutionary Alternative to Left-Wing Politics" in *Subversion* 16).

7) You are right that the class composition of an organisation as well as its political programme determine its class nature, but we might disagree about who is middle-class and who is working class (see correspondance on this issue in previous issues of Subversion). But who are these middle class people in revolutionary organisations who you say have been such a barrier to revolution? If you're referring to Trot groups, they are in our view capitalist organisations (with a state-capitalist programme).

8) You then repeat the same points about "conditional support", contradicting yourself by saying a) you don't support the slaughtering of our class, and b) "...'cool' as a word meaning 'conditional support' means we respect the initiatives taken towards self management & violent resistance to [capitalist states]. Mainly [!] by the people, & not their political leadership." This correspondance was started by Class War's use of the word "cool" to describe the FLN of Algeria. Their "initiative towards self-management" etc. was to crush the working class and create a new capitalist regime (which, to my knowledge, even the most gullible of Trots have never called a "workers' state"!). It is this casual blurring of the line between struggles of the working class and the actions of bourgeois states or proto-states (such as all national liberation movements) that cause us to describe Class War as opportunist.

9) Your final point about ultra left imperialism is not totally clear, but if you mean that to fail to support one side in a war necessarily means to support the other side, then this surely applies in all wars. Is this not tantamount to saying that the only choices that exist are between this group of capitalists and that group, with us workers as nothing more than cannon-fodder on one side or another? Is this not an utter denial of the existence of a class, the working class, with its own independent interests separate from those of the capitalist class? For all that they may sometimes make war on each other with the utmost savagery, our rulers' interests are fundamentally and diametrically opposed to ours. We should never abandon our class interest by siding with any of our enemies. And for all that they make war on each other, the capitalists are in every country united in support of their class interest, which they pursue when necessary with single-minded fervour. We should be as single-minded in support of ours!

Surfversion

You can find our postal address on page 1. The email address given in previous issues of Subversion is no longer in use. To contact us by email now, send your message to:

knightrose@geocities.com

You can also check out Subversion's very own site on the internet at:
http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/8195

Subversion Recommended Reading

In *Subversion* 17 we reviewed a book about the struggles and ideas of the anarchist-communists in Japan in the 1920s and 1930s and mentioned a pamphlet on "The Anarchist Movement in Japan" written by the book's author John Crump.

This pamphlet has now been published by our comrades in the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF). Many fascinating photographs and illustrations have been added to the text, such as a very graphic cartoon from 1923 captioned "The anarchist farmer is blowing snot at the landlord"!

The pamphlet costs £1.00 from the ACF c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. Definitely worth getting hold of a copy.

The ACF's quarterly journal *Organise!* is available from the same address.

We also recommend:

Wildcat
Write to: BM Cat, London WC1N 3XX (don't mention Wildcat on the envelope)

Aufheben
c/o Prior House, Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY.

Aut-op-sy is an autonomist/communist discussion list on the internet. To subscribe, send the message "subscribe aut-op-sy" to majordomo@lists.village.virginia.edu

To contact *The Poor, The Bad And The Angry* (whose article 'Our Antipolitics' is published on the back page) use this address only: PO Box 3305, Oakland, CA 94609, USA. Ask for the publication by name on a separate note inside the envelope. There is a Poor Bad & Angry website at: http://www.webcom.com/maxang/

The Poor, The Bad and The Angry

(continued from page 17)

No national liberation movement has ever led to the rise of a society without exploitation; all regimes produced by "people's wars" and "wars of national liberation" have been and always will be the voluntary or involuntary lackeys [agents] of imperialism and the world market against the needs of the local working classes and indigenous people. A Turkish proverb says it best: "When the axe came into the forest, the trees said: the handle is one of us." Any support for national liberation movements or for nationalism in any form is support for the murder and exploitation of the poor by capital. The FMLN, IRA, PLO, ANC, etc. are capitalist and counter-revolutionary organizations having more in common with the mafia than with the armed actions of an authentic revolutionary movement.

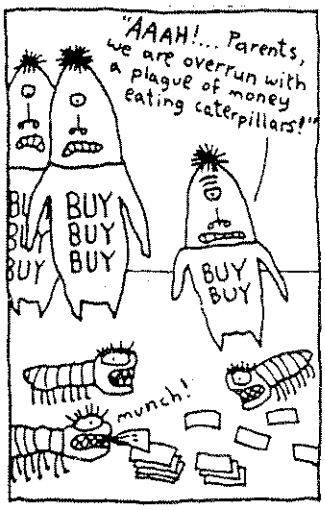
Throughout the 20th century, labour unions have served capitalism both as labour merchandizing outfits and as police organizations, specifically against the struggles of unionized workers and more generally against the working class and poor as a whole. As 20th century states have become more frequently compelled to intervene in the economy, labour unions, regardless of ideology or the subjective intentions of their members, have tended to become mechanisms of the capitalist state. Working class people have to fight outside of and against all unions and unionist ideologies.

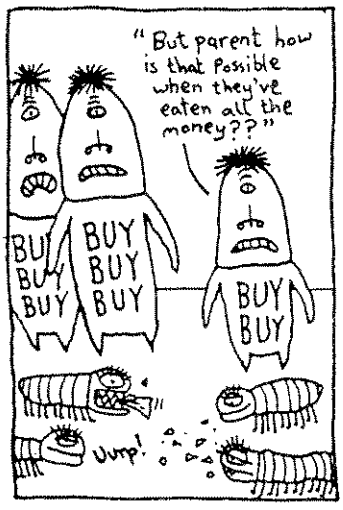
The abolition of capitalism has nothing in common with democracy, nationalization of major industries, power in the hands of leftists or workers' self-management of the economy. The goal of an authentic, anti-statist communist movement is the abolition of wage labour, the eradication of all forms of market relations, the destruction of all states and national borders, and in necessary unity with this negation, the emergence of new social relations where poverty and unnecessary toil are abolished and work no longer rules social life.

In spite of their flaws and limits, the defeated social revolutions of the 20th century, and the mass collective violence of the poor in revolt from Los Angeles to Kurdistan, are the embryonic expression of the future anti-statist and unyielding class dictatorship against capital worldwide: what must become a consciously communist movement without frontiers or compromises, a new world trying to come alive. Communist revolution, and class struggles that tend towards communism, imply the despotism of the exploited against exploitation and exploiters, the violence of the poor against their violation by poverty.

For us, communism is a real and living movement that tends towards the abolition of existing conditions. The destruction of commodity relations and the birth of authentic human community aren't simply waiting to be brought about as a series of measures consciously enacted "The Day After the Revolution." These communist urges live today as a repressed impulse in collective struggles, and in many small gestures and attitudes. We fight for this. We seek companions in this effort.

THE CONSUMERS





The cartoon above, and the strip used on page 5-6 to illustrate the Green Communism article, are from the *excellent* cartoon book called **The Consumers** by Paul Petard. Write to F19, 30 Silver Street, Reading, RG1.

The Poor, The Bad & The Angry

The following article was written by the publishers of a magazine called *The Poor, The Bad And The Angry*. We are reproducing it in Subversion because it develops at greater length some of the points we express in our own set of basic principles (see 'What We Stand For'on page 1). Details of how to contact *The Poor, The Bad And The Angry* are given in the 'Recommended Reading' column on page 16.

We live on a planet devastated by social relations based on money and market exchange. Regardless of the rhetorical or physical violence they offer one another in their fight for power, regardless of leftist or populist verbiage, every government and government-to-be, every politician and police force on this planet exists to defend and maintain this system. Different politicians and parties propose different management strategies for capital, but regardless of their jargon Yeltsin and Mandela, Time-Warner and MTV, Fidel Castro, the ecology lobby and the most bedraggled college campus socialist groups are all in agreement on this: the world of wage labour is to be maintained at any cost, and what capitalism is is never to be identified in clinically specific, clear terms. Seemingly normal and inevitable facts - that an individual has nothing but her or his labour power, that they must sell it to an enterprise to be able to live, that everything exists to be bought or sold, that social relations revolve around money and commodity exchange - are the result of a long and violent process.

The world we live in is the world of capitalism. Imposed and maintained by terror, mystification and inertia, capitalism is the historically specific form of class society based on the exploitation of human labour power as a commodity, on wage labour, money, and commodity production. Modern capitalism, in its free market and its statist forms, is a totalitarian system that has conquered the world, devastating human life and the planetary environment in an ever accelerating manner. But capitalism has also given rise to social forces that could bring about the revolutionary destruction of this system, and the rise of a new way of life; chief among them the mass collective actions of proletarians fighting against the conditions of their exploitation and impoverishment.

The class struggle is the primary liberatory force of our time. By class struggle, we mean not only the fight of wage-earners against their employers. The class war includes all the struggles of exploited and dispossessed people all over the world against their conditions of exploitation and impoverishment, wage-earning and unwaged, urban and rural, low-paid and high-paid. It encompasses our fights against racism, sexism, and homophobia, but not as separate reformist issues. Class warfare involves both fights for concessions from capital and the fight for our own power outside of and against capitalist social relations.

So-called Socialist and Communist parties, social democracy, Leninism and all its mutant children, are the left wing of capitalism's political ensemble/ideological spectrum. Any and all political groupings that aren't openly and explicitly committed to the fight against work and wage labour are counter-subversive efforts. We are against any cooperation or collaboration with leftist parties and groups.

National liberation movements are movements in which the exploited are marshalled to fight and die for the political ambitions of the local bourgeoisie or a substitute bourgeoisie of guerrilla chieftains or intellectuals.

(continued on page 16)

Subversion

FREE Number 22

In this issue: "Green Communism" - Letters, Replies, Debates ...
Fighting the JSA ...Still Thinking About Getting a Job?
The IRA and the class war ... Riots in London

Is This The Way They Say The Future's Meant To Feel?

Subversion 22

INTRODUCTION

This issue of Subversion is made up almost entirely of discussion with and amongst our readers. For those in the movement who prefer debates behind closed doors and the miraculous appearance of a 'line' on everything from the Russian Revolution to the best toothpaste for revolutionaries this may be disconcerting.

For ourselves, we find the growing number of non-members reading Subversion critically, writing to us, adding to or contesting articles, and writing from their own experience, a very positive development.

The parameters of the debate in Subversion are clearly *revolutionary*. We perceive a growing core of common politics emerging amongst many revolutionaries and a clarification of where the real differences remain - many of which will only be resolved in the practice of the class struggle.

This issue can mostly be read and understood on its own, but if this is the first issue you have picked up we urge you to write off for the back issues to get a more rounded view of the subjects being discussed. We of course welcome letters and articles from readers contributing to current debates and opening up new areas for discussion.

Our address is on page 9.

This is a small note about **READING**. It would be better for us all to read in groups so that we could discuss important aspects of what we are reading, however, this is probably not possible for most of us, so it is essential that we read everything carefully. Read everything as if you had to write a letter in reply to it. Definitely read it twice. Have patience with the writers of articles, who may not be able to express their thoughts absolutely clearly, think about what they are trying to say, don't just write them off because they have used some phrase or other that you dislike. Finally, try to read everything SUBVERSION publishes while naked.

Want to get involved in Subversion?

There are many ways you could get involved in Subversion. For instance:

- ☐ Correspond with us on issues raised in our bulletin
- ☐ Write articles for inclusion in our bulletin (let us know in advance an outline of what you're thinking of writing)
- ☐ Take extra copies of the Subversion bulletin to distribute to friends or at local meetings/events
- ☐ Copy and distribute relevant articles more widely
- ☐ Contribute financially on a regular basis

Ideally we would like to see Subversion grow and become more effective by joining up with other local active groups following a period of joint discussion and activity. But we recognise that at the present time many individual revolutionaries are fairly isolated. If you're in this situation and you already do most or all of the above list it would be a logical step to consider joining our group. If you live in or within easy travelling distance of Greater Manchester we would urge you to do this. If you live further away the practical benefits of joining would be less but we could still guarantee:

- ☐ Regular minutes of our meetings
- ☐ Access to material we receive
- ☐ Regular contact through letters/phone calls/email
- ☐ Draft articles for Subversion for comment

In this way you would have more influence on the direction and activity of the group.

Obviously if we had a large influx of individual members like this we would then all have to discuss new ways of organising that would more effectively involve everyone.

So - think about it!

What We Stand For

We meet regularly for political discussion and to organise our activities. The following is a brief description of our basic political principles:

We are against all forms of capitalism; private, state and self-managed.

We are for communism, which is a classless society in which all goods are distributed according to needs and desires.

We are actively opposed to all ideologies which divide the working class, such as religion, sexism and racism.

We are against all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" movements such as the IRA.

The working class (wage labourers, the unemployed, housewives, etc.) is the revolutionary class; only its struggle can liberate humanity from scarcity, war and economic crisis.

Trade unions are part of the capitalist system, selling our labour power to the bosses and sabotaging our struggles. We support independent working class struggle, in all areas of life under capitalism, outside the control of the trade unions and all political parties.

We totally oppose all capitalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. We are against participation in fronts with these organisations.

We are against participation in parliamentary elections; we are for the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class and the establishment of organisations of working class power.

We are against sectarianism, and support principled co-operation among revolutionaries.

We exist to actively participate in escalating the class war towards communism.

Everybody's Talking About...

Green Communism

The article on **'Green' Communism** in **Subversion 21** has provoked a lively reaction, reflected over the first few pages of this issue. There are **critical letters** from **JM** (below)and **Oxford Green Anarchists** (overleaf), which **we answer** on page 4, followed by a substantial contribution from a contact in **Hastings** (page 5). Finally we round off the debate (for now!) with an article reprinted from **The Poor, The Bad and The Angry** (page 8).

LETTER FROM JM

Dear Subversion,

I would like to respond to the essay 'Green Communism' printed in your most recent issue.

This essay is so ill-informed and wrong-headed that it really does not make a serious contribution to debate. There are so many basic errors in the essay that it would take an entire essay to address its mistakes! So rather than critique its fundamental flaws, I will just focus on some key points. I cannot - and would not want to - speak on behalf of all individuals involved in the anti-civilisation anarchist current, but as someone participating in this current I want to offer a personal response to the inaccuracies and slurs aimed at what your essay reductively refers to as 'anti-technological anarchists'.

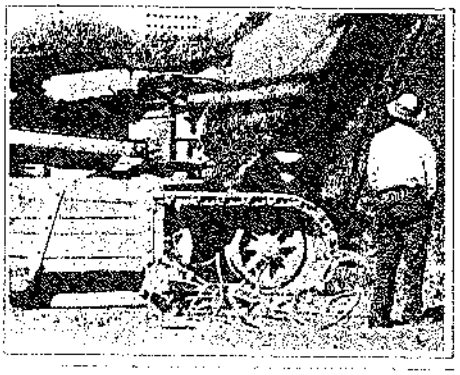
First, your writer could do everyone the favour of taking anti-civilisation ideas seriously, rather than just engaging in uninformed assertion and smear tactics. Anti-civilisation anarchism is *not* 'militant reformism', nor 'militant, liberal reformism'. It does not just 'call itself anarchist'. Anti-civilisation anarchists do not merely 'claim to be anarchists' and certainly haven't 'fallen for the lies of capitalism hook, line and sinker'. Part of this is sheer ignorance. (Using Bookchin's *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism* as a guide to the anti-civilisation current is like using National Front propaganda as a guide to understanding the lives of Black Britons. Your author's cheap jibe (taken from Bookchin) that at least in the kind of society Zerzan envisages no one would have to read 'the crap he wrote' cuts no ice, as your author clearly hasn't read Zerzan anyway, but just parrots Bookchin!). But part of this consists of outright smears. Your author wants to undermine anti-civilisation anarchists by name-calling: they're not anarchists, they're liberals; they're not revolutionary, they're reformists; and they don't have a sophisticated analysis - they're naive and (of course) capital's dupes. Give anti-civilisation anarchists some credit! Judge the ideas. Look at the primary texts, not Bookchin's second-hand distortions! Know what you're talking about before you publish work on it!

Anti-civilisation currents *extend* the classical anarchist analysis *beyond* the traditional emphasis on capital and the state. *Of course*, capital and the state are important sources of power and need to be abolished through revolution. There's no argument there. But there are other forms of power which *preceded* both and which need to be abolished along with them, if an anarchist revolution is to succeed. Your author writes "...the destruction of the environment is the result, not of civilisation, not of technology, but of the domination of the planet by capital." But *power* - including the power to engage in environmental destruction - developed *before* capital. Capital is just the latest (and deadliest) form assumed by power, and civilisation is the name anti-civilisation anarchists use to characterise the ensemble of social relations and techniques of coercion and control within which capital and the state emerge.

"Capital would like us to think that the problem does not lie in the control of production and the existence of wage labour", writes your author. It's reductive to say that 'the' problem can be located in any one issue. But in one respect your author is right. Production and labour is a crucial problem. But the problem is far deeper than your author seems to suspect. The issue is not merely 'the control' of production, but the *abolition* of production; not merely the existence of 'wage labour', but the existence of *labour in any form*. Anti-civilisation anarchists aren't just 'anti-technological anarchists': they want to abolish power in all its forms, *including work*. To assert a pro-technology anarchist position means envisaging the continuation of labour in an anarchist society. But who is going to force people to labour in a power-free society? Not me! Are you? And will you want to keep on working? I won't!

Anti-civilisation anarchists recognise that work is *in itself* a primary source of oppression. But your author, appropriating wholesale Marxist analysis, assumes that there are such things as productive forces. These are just the alienated energies of people working for capital. If everyone stops working, the 'productive forces' disappear. And so, incidentally, does technology! Technology, in a sense, is a red herring. Anti-civilisation anarchists oppose it because it is a powerful means of oppression, alienation and environmental destruction. But a more fundamental issue is the destruction of the whole social nexus - i.e. civilisation - that makes its very production and usage possible.

In resistance,
JM.



Green Communism Debate continued

LETTER FROM OXFORD GREEN ANARCHISTS

Dear Subversion,

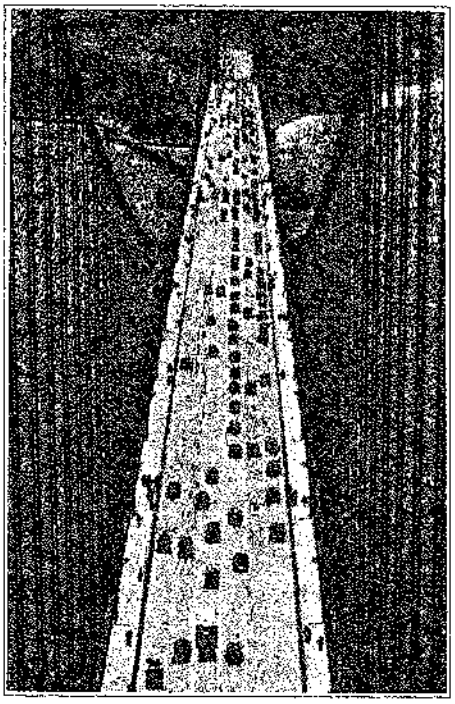
Thanks for Subversion 21 - keep us on your mailing list.

In response to 'Green' Communism, you still fail to distinguish between technology and tool use. You should know from John Zerzan's definition in the *GA* you quote from that technology is 'the ensemble of the division of labour'. According to Mumford's *Technics & Civilisation*, the first technologies were ancient armies and work-gangs, not their weapons and tools. The real issue is how they were *organised*, not how they were equipped.

Subversion thinks that uttering the magic word 'Capitalism' explains everything but it should be obvious that a society divided heirachically between organisers and the organised can never be equal or free. Mumford's ancient armies and work-gangs preceded capitalism by several thousand years and he also suggests the rise of the clock and the consequent intensification of organisation around it *created* capitalism. Unlike FC, we aren't reductionists. It's not simply a case that technology is economically determined or vice versa - there's a dialectical relationship between the two.

We're amazed you 'cannot conceive of cities going', as if they weren't as much a product of history as everything else. Cities are technology, a complex process that has to be organised in a way that makes a future free and equal society impossible. You'd be less enthusiastic about Bookchin's 'libertarian' municipalism if you took David Watson's point on board that 'the city as polis created not only politics, but *the police*.' If you're talking about 'breaking them down into more human size', you're either effectively arguing for an end to cities or not talking about a scale that's really 'human' after all. As to this bit about 'planting trees', we've been around long enough to call it tokenism when Statists do it.

Your comment about 'a return to back-breaking labour' shows you haven't understood the first thing about anarcho-primitivism. Scarcity is a product of Civilisation, the powerful rationing those powerless and dependent on them, to exploit and control them. Nature is abundant as demonstrated by hunter-gatherers who work under 20 hours a week to meet their basic needs. They're in control of that work too - it's unalienated. The more civilised things have got, the harder we've had to work. You surely won't disagree that civilisation has been built on the extraction of surplus value - our ancestors' sweat - but there's more to it than that. We've also had less control over the work we do (and every



other aspect of our lives) the more complex, interdependent and organised the economy has become. We have to challenge such organisation itself, not just the organisers, or any new society will otherwise just reproduce the old one. Your comments on appropriate technology for a post-revolutionary society are an inappropriate compromise based upon a fundamental misunderstanding.

Holding a stage view of history, you seem to think communism will come out of capitalism's contradictions but all we can see is a society which is encroaching more and more on us and making us all more and more dependent on it in the name of 'liberation from Nature'. That won't free us from alienation, it's just *more* separation. We got it right at the start and for the vast majority of human history. People were free, equal and self-determining when *primitive* communism prevailed, without even the individualist distinction between Self and Other - as Bookchin himself argued in his seminal *Ecology of Freedom*, Chapter 5, before reformist municipalism addled his brain. Civilisation, whether capitalist or not, won't facilitate our liberation - only its destruction and the end of our dependence on it will. All the truly radical currents in history appreciated this as obvious - you might find Zerzan's *Who Killed Ned Ludd?* most instructive here. Your ridiculously misrepresentative caricature of GA's revolutionary strategy is half a decade out of date but even here our emphasis on direct action and breaking dependency comes through.

You do indeed ' have much to learn' from groups like 'Reclaim the Streets' as they have rejected the compromise with Civilisation your presentation of Capitalism as a be-all and end-all implies. Liverpool's significance was not that the dockers took RTS on board - RTS had been doing other revolutionary stuff for years - but that more archaic conservative, workerist currents weren't seen by them as worthy of the same consideration.

Rather than referring readers to the poisonous smears of Bookchin and his partner Janet Biehl, you'd have done better concluding 'Green' Communism by referring them to David Watson's *Beyond Bookchin* (Black and Red, Autonomedia, 1996) and Bob Black's *Anarchy Beyond Leftism* (CAL, 1997) to ensure they will have something useful to contribute to the struggle in the future.

Yours, for the destruction of Civilisation, Oxford GAs.

Green Anarchist can be contacted at: BCM 1715, London WC1N 3XX, UK.

Green Communism Debate continued

SUBVERSION REPLY TO JM AND OXFORD GREEN ANARCHISTS

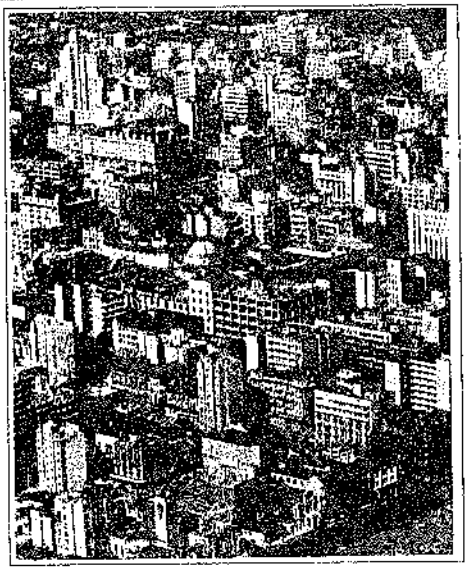
There are many points raised in these letters. It's probably best to start with the bits we agree with. GA are quite right when they talk about the dialectical relationship between technology and society. For the benefit of the uninitiated, this means that technology and society don't develop independently of one another. Changes in technology lead to changes in the way society is organised, equally changes in social organisation lead to changes in the technology that society uses. The one influences the other and vice versa. Equally important, however, is the effect of class struggle on social development. When our class struggles, social organisation and technology change to meet the threat we pose - which of course means the working class has to respond in a different way. It is our contention that it is this conflict which is the most important. Our article 'Green Communism' tried to explore (in part) how struggles that are labeled as 'green' or 'environmental' are often a part of our class's response to capital's attacks.

Both letters accuse us of holding a stages theory of history. However, GA also seem to do so. They talk about the stage of 'primitive' communism (an expression coined by Marx and Engels), to describe a time in pre-history when people were 'free, equal and self-determining'. We are not in a position to dispute this, neither are we in a position to agree. Civilization came into being when social classes emerged. It represents the domination and exploitation of the many by the few. There have been many examples of 'civilization' - all have represented different forms of class society. We have no problems with JM's assertion that 'other forms of power preceded' capital and state. Different civilizations have used different forms and combinations of domination: patriarchy, democracy, religion, race, brute force and most recently the domination of class by class through mindless toil enslaved to machines.

We do not hold the view that communism only became possible with the creation of modern capitalism, we have had many idle discussions over pints of beer, arguing whether it would have been possible in earlier social epochs. And broadly speaking we think it could have been. But it was idle speculation for one simple reason. We do not live in the era of the Peasants Revolt or of Spartacus. We live in 1997, in a time when the only social system in the world (with maybe one or two insignificant exceptions for a few thousand people), is capitalism. Capitalism uses any form of domination that is useful to its own needs. So patriarchy remains (but watered down), religion remains (but in the back seat), racism remains too, seemingly as strong as ever, but pre-eminent is the domination of people by machine - of living labour dominated by dead labour, working to extract surplus value (profit) for the ruling class. We believe that by destroying that relationship and the state which supports it and hence the domination of the ruling class and its lackeys, that a genuine human society can be created - an end to the 'civilization' that has dominated history for the past thousands of years.

We believe that the result of the struggle against capitalism (the currently existing form of civilization) could end in the creation of communism. GA seem, at a glance, to want the same thing. But on closer examination what they actually appear to want is a return to 'primitive' communism. As far as we can tell this is shared by other primitivists. They believe that the time before civilization was a time of plenty and ease. They approve of the idea of a society 'without even the individualist distinction between Self and Other', an end to cities and in the case of JM 'the abolition of production; not merely the existence of wage-labour, but the existence of labour in any form...including work'.

This does not fit into our views for a number of reasons. Firstly, we wonder where all the billions of people in the



world are going to live. We wonder where they are going to find food, how they are going to feed themselves. We presume that neither GA nor JM are advocating genocide as a way forward to the new society. That was why our original article accepted that cities would survive in a future society - indeed a view we have heard expressed by RTS activists who are also anarchist communists. Just how things would develop as human history unfolds is, of course, a completely different matter. We have only a limited idea what a communist society would look like at its beginning, let alone after a hundred or two years. We would speculate that abominations like London, Paris, Manchester would disappear.

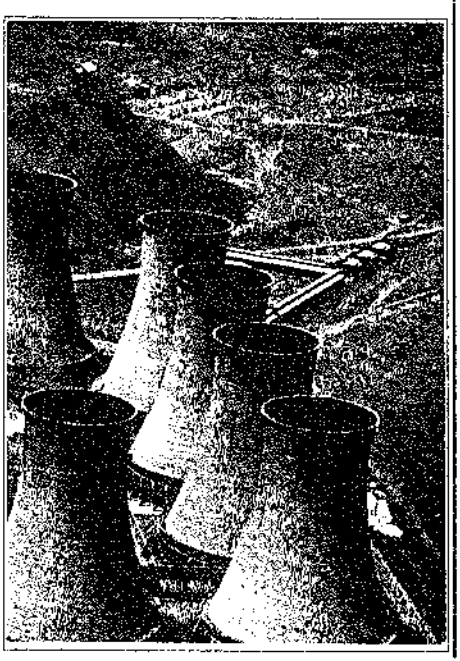
Secondly, we are not at all against labour. It is our view that making things is fundamental to human being. We are against working for others and being exploited. We are against human labour being dominated by machinery. We want labour to be a creative activity, not a form of drudgery. It's an old expression, but we want to break down the division between work and play. In the context of the modern class struggle we see tendencies towards a 'refusal of (alienated) work' - a refusal to accept domination by bosses and their right to screw more out of us at their will. To some this means struggle at work, sabotage, not exerting themselves, not giving the bosses their creativity. To others it means simply avoiding the labour process altogether. In either case we support them.

Green Communism Debate continued

Thirdly, we are not sure what GA mean by 'without even the individualist distinction between Self and Other'. We are not herd animals. On one (apparently contradictory) level this is exactly what capital and the state are aiming at for the majority of society - it uses many ideologies which strengthen the 'nation', the 'community', 'democracy' and so on. We would classify these as socially totalitarian ideals. As we said earlier, we have no idea what a communist society would look like after a hundred years or so. However, we can predict that even in its early days the kind of individualist competition prevalent today will die an unlamented death. However, communism will be created by people as they already exist, not by some idealised form of humanity. In that context many of the current limitations of people will carry forward. We debate amongst ourselves just how much people will be individuals and how much they will be social beings. We suspect that they will realise that a free society will allow the free development of all. Individuals will be social beings - not atomised, isolated and uncared for.

We finish by repeating GA's signing off, though we suspect that we mean something fundamentally different.

For the destruction of civilization., Subversion



LETTER FROM S., HASTINGS

Dear comrades

Congratulations on the article 'Green Communism' in Subversion 21. It is good to see the small anti-state communist milieu in this country turning it's attention to matters ecological as is also shown in recent articles in *Organise!* and *Wildcat's* critique of Marxist 'progressivism' and engagement with 'primitivist' ideas. As is clearly recognised by your article continued capitalist expansion (otherwise known as 'Development' or 'Progress') can only lead to increased degradation of the biosphere and human immiseration.

People holding anarchist and communist positions have always been involved in protest movements against the destruction of nature, harmful technologies, abuse of animals etc etc. And this is right - at its most basic level it is right simply because the world which capital is creating - a world dominated by concrete, plastic, machines, pollution and stress - is not the world we want.

But in terms of theory, analysis, what can we offer to an understanding of the dire situation we find ourselves in and a strategy for getting out of it?

So far the only recognisably anti-capitalist line to emerge has been the so-called 'primitivist movement' which you mention. Now, I agree in general with most of your criticism of it but it is as well to remember that as ideas develop quite often a healthy corrective to past errors will go too far and then have to be corrected itself. When these ideas first emerged I was quite attracted to them (ie Perlman, Bradford, Fifth Estate etc etc) because they were a refreshing, exhilarating challenge to the technology worship so prevalent not only in the Left but also amongst genuine anti-capitalists. The problem as I see it with these ideas, at least in their more extreme form, is that it is just as ridiculous to say that you are anti-technology as it is to worship it. A bow and arrow is technology, a digging stick is technology, to gather and prepare herbs to cure a sickness is a technological procedure. Humanity is a technological species, it is our ability to understand and manipulate the natural world which makes us human.

To me those who maintain that they are against all technology are like a mirror image of those reformists in the Green movement who are incapable of going beyond environmentalism:- both see technology as being the problem rather than the social relations which give rise to it, one lot advocate lead-free petrol and windmills while the other lot appear to demand a return to the stone-age.

Technology is not neutral, it is produced by society and hence it serves the perceived interests of the dominant forces in society. This is not the same as saying that all technology is bad and should be abolished. Certainly after thousands of years of class-society and centuries of capitalist expansion there is very much which must be got rid-of but we would be mad not to see that much of what has been learned over the centuries will be useful in creating the sort of sustainable, pleasurable world that we as communists want to see. Just because we want to abandon the private motor car it doesn't mean we have to abandon the wheel. Communists have always been, rightly, wary of drawing up blueprints of the future but if we are going to engage in a critique of capitalist technology, of the way in which capital organises production and social life then it is very unconvincing to simply say that once the social relations of capitalism are overthrown everything will come right inevitably. People want to know a bit more than that.

As you pointed out in your article one strand of the emerging Green ideology tends toward trying to get people to accept a self imposed austerity out of misplaced guilt at capitalism's environmental destruction. Communists on the other hand envisage a future society of abundance; not only is hunger and crude physical deprivation to be abolished but life is to be richer, more pleasurable, more creative and fulfilling

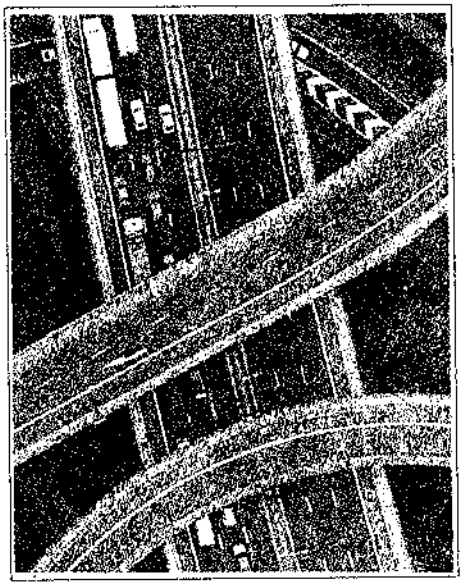
Green Communism Debate continued

than anything conceivable under capitalism. Since late twentieth century capitalism poses *itself* as the society of abundance and *its* expansion as the road to ever greater abundance we are really obliged to point out the difference between our concept of abundance and capital's and how it would be brought about.

Although it is *true* it is not *enough* to point out that on a global scale capitalism does *not* produce abundance. Capital's ideological apparatus (advertising, media, education etc etc) is very powerful and if it can convince enough people to *want* its vision of abundance (cars, videos, jet airliners, Rolex watches, Barbie dolls blah blah blah) then it has achieved a significant victory against the tendency towards communism which undoubtedly exists within our species. So if we want communist ideas to be taken seriously by those engaged in actions against environmental destruction we should be willing to at least be prepared to discuss how a communist society would function in a material as well as an organisational sense.

To return for a moment to the advocates of 'primitivism', although for the most part they are reluctant to 'get down to the nuts and bolts' it seems that, despite the extremism of someone like Zerzan, most of them advocate the abolition of all technology developed since the industrial revolution. Although they might talk about being 'anti-civilisation' mostly I think they want to see people living in small agricultural communities with a technology roughly equivalent to that which existed in medieval Europe and trading through barter systems with their immediate neighbours. There are still a few parts of the world where people could exist in the hunter-gatherer mode and presumably they would envisage that that is what would happen.

Assuming that this were to be achieved I see no reason why after a few generations had passed and there were no one around who had had direct experience of the horrors of capitalist



society the whole process of commodity exchange and wage labour shouldn't start up again.

As communists we should argue that far from wanting to see people living in small isolated communities we want to see our species genuinely united on a global scale in a world human community. I would say that this presupposes the maintenance of some technology - as a minimum sailing craft but also probably airships, telecommunications of some sort, radar and radio to make travel safer and so on. This in turn presupposes that there would be a need for some mining, fabrication of metal, production of some source of power etc etc. Although the junk left over from the capitalist era could probably be creatively recycled for quite a while!! As well as transportation and communication there are also other areas where fairly 'advanced' technology might be maintained eg medical and entertainments. Do we want to give up recorded music and the cinema for example? I also imagine that some people would still be interested in pursuing 'scientific' interests eg astronomy, geology, natural history etc, tools would be required which, as above, would require a certain minimum 'industrial' infrastructure.

I must say again that it is quite right for communists to refrain from 'Utopianism' in its negative sense - dotting the 'i's and crossing the 't's on some dream of perfection - but I would say that the above outline is pretty reasonable; people will not want overnight to abandon every aspect of the technology which exists nor is it possible to do so and communism must be created and maintained on a conscious, global level if it is to have any chance of surviving.

So we must take what is useful from the existing technology and scrap what isn't as well as using all our imagination and creativity to invent new, more human ways of living. Although it is reasonable to assume that a communist society would keep some aspects of 'advanced' technology it would be on such a radically reduced scale that the negative effects of mass capitalist industrialism would disappear. As you point out in your article expansion is one of capitalism's most basic features, if something *can* be produced the logic of capitalist economics is to produce it in ever increasing quantities, to build in obsolescence so that even more can be produced etc etc. In a communist society where production was genuinely geared to people's needs and desires it goes without saying that this would not be the case. So I would envisage that communist society would develop a sort of 'two level system of production' (for want of a less ugly phrase).

Mostly people would be living in communities small enough to allow the convivial, face to face organisation of activities. Most of the necessities of daily living (food, shelter, clothing, basic medical care, furniture, tools etc) would be produced locally in ways in harmony with the local ecosystem and based on organic gardening, permaculture (intelligent design of buildings, living systems, elimination of 'waste' etc), traditional woodland management and crafts and craft production of all kinds using natural materials. Although I feel uncomfortable as a long standing vegan to be saying this, it is also probable that as reforestation progresses (as is vital from an ecological point of view) and rivers and seas recover from industrial and agricultural pollution, hunting and fishing will provide significant food resources for many communities. I

Green Communism Debate continued

would not envisage that animal farming would continue on any but the most tiny scale as it is inefficient, cruel and uses up too much human time.

On top of this basic level of production would be a smaller sector of more 'advanced' technology ensuring that people around the world could keep in touch with each other (to exchange information, ideas, maintain friendships etc), that anything that needed to be planned on a regional or global level could be, that people were free to travel around the world if they so wished, that medical emergencies could be dealt with, that people could produce and enjoy sophisticated entertainments from time to time.

The question that we as communists have to ask (and answer) is this: would it be possible for a free society to maintain this minimal infrastructure of 'advanced' technology without recourse to compulsion, to alienated labour or something equivalent?

As far as what I have described as the 'basic' level of production is concerned I see no problem at all, as you say "people will freely associate together to produce and will freely take from the common store according to their needs." People will engage in activities which both please them and which go toward producing the necessities of life and making life pleasurable, there will be no compulsion or alienation.

But what about mining, building wind generators, maintaining a railway system, producing steel and all the other 'industrial' processes that might have to be undertaken to maintain the sort of infrastructure I have described? Could this be done without wrecking the natural world and imposing alienated labour on people? I would say yes. Let's take as an example steel production. A very limited amount might be needed for such tasks as maintaining railways, producing tools, perhaps building some large structures etc. It is quite possible that one steel plant could produce all that was needed in an area the size of the British Isles in say 2 or 3 weeks each year. It might only take 100 or so people to do it. The plant would obviously have been designed to make its operation as pleasant, safe and non-polluting as possible. Surely volunteers would be found to do the work in shifts in a situation where they could meet with new people and have fun. In fact the whole thing could take on the air of a festival with work being interspersed with performance, games, dancing, whatever people wanted. Even today under capitalism people go off to do grape picking, for example, and regard it more or less as a holiday.

The same would apply to all production involving 'advanced' technology; the amounts needed would be so small that their production would not have to be a burden to anyone, the small scale ought also to ensure that no significant pollution or destruction of nature should take place.

What about tasks in the 'advanced' technology sector which would have to be performed on a more permanent basis such as communications and transport? Again I don't see why it should be a problem. Although the reduction would not be as great as in production it is likely that much less time and effort would have to be put in as compared to now owing to pace of life. If some people like to garden or make clothes why shouldn't some people like to drive a train, fly an airship or help to organise a telephone system? Obviously in a communist society no one can be compelled to do anything and no one would sacrifice themselves to any of these tasks, they would only get done if people *did* find them enjoyable as well as of use to society. Sharing the tasks out fairly would mean that no one had to do more than they wanted, in fact you might have the opposite problem with everyone wanting to have a go at flying the airship!

What about the energy requirements of such a society? Day to day heating and cooking needs could hopefully be met by the use of efficient minimum pollution wood burners using locally produced wood from vastly expanded managed woodlands. Electricity production would be sharply curtailed, electricity being used for the things it is most suitable for, ie not heating and cooking which is ridiculously inefficient, but for things like communications systems, audio-visual entertainments, computers etc. Wind and small-scale hydroelectric systems should suffice. With massive reforestation countering the 'greenhouse effect' it should be possible to make use of the remaining fossil fuels in those 'advanced' technology processes where necessary. Needless to say the extraction and use of fossil fuels will be on a minute scale compared to today and people would only undertake it *if* it could be done without damage to the biosphere.

So when we as communists talk about a society of abundance we mean one in which people's material needs are met easily and pleasurably, where people have every opportunity to travel, learn about the world and create, where people are surrounded by the beauty and abundance of the world and feel at home in it. Capitalism's 'abundance' on the other hand is a mirage based on the buying and selling of commodities and activity carried out under duress.

We firmly believe that the society of abundance and freedom we advocate *is* possible and that in order to repair the damage of industrial capitalism, it is *not* necessary to retreat into some self-denying Green austerity where only our most basic biological needs can be met. But we are not woolly headed idealists dreaming of some impossible Utopia; hopefully the very short and rough

Green Communism Debate continued

sketch I have presented above shows that our vision is a practical and realisable vision. I would hope that it might also stimulate the debate in this area.

For example...

If capitalism's 'development of the productive forces' has led to a situation where ecological catastrophe threatens the existence of our species, does this have implications for our view of class struggle as absolutely central to the social transformation we desire? If we stand for the dismantling of mass capitalist industrialism, does this affect our intervention in industrial disputes?

Much could be said about my rough outline of a possible future society by people with a greater practical understanding of industrial processes than I have; which technologies might be of use and which would *have* to go because some of their implications are unacceptable on any scale?

Anti-capitalist revolutionaries often sneer at the formation of communes and pooh pooh advocates of 'small is beautiful' and self-sufficiency etc - and often they are right to because such ventures *can* be, and often are, an attempt to escape reality, to live in a bubble isolated from the struggle against capitalism. But if we wish to see the way that people produce their needs and fulfil their desires *change*, then surely experiments in collective living, organic gardening, permaculture, woodland management etc need to be carried out now so that people can develop and spread the skills which will be necessary in the future we envisage. Nor should such experiments be divorced from the struggle against capitalism - the recent Wandsworth land occupation shows the sort of direction in which these things could develop.

And I think that's quite enough to be going on with!

In solidarity,
S, Hastings

THE QUESTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS: NOTES TOWARDS TRANSCENDING THE PROGRESS/ ANTI-PROGRESS DEBATE

ONE

Marxs schema of progress can be taken as descriptive, not prescriptive. The Marxist formulation is that humanity began in primitive communism, and is going through various stages of class society (savagery, barbarism, feudalism, capitalism, etc.) that develop the productive forces of the economy before humanity can abolish class society and achieve communism at a higher level. Marxs agent for the abolition of class society, the industrial proletariat, has the capacity to do this, not only because of its position at the point of production, but also because of its aggregation and organization into a self-conscious class by the process of industrial production itself. This describes what has happened historically. It does not describe what has to happen.

TWO

The abolition of class society and the creation of communism could have occurred at any stage of class society. Clearly, if communism existed for primitive, hunter-gatherer societies where the productive economic forces were virtually nil and scarcity practically universal, then class society can be abolished and communism created at stages of society where the productive forces are more developed and certain scarcities have been eliminated. Thus, it is not necessary to wait for the full development of the productive forces and the total elimination of scarcity. Stages of the Marxist schema can be skipped.

THREE

Furthermore, insurrectionary movements to abolish class society have emerged at every stage of class society, spearheaded by non-industrial as well as industrial laboring classes. The slave revolts of ancient Rome, the peasant uprisings of the Middle Ages, and the indigenous rebellions of New World native peoples, no less than the workers revolutions of the 18th, 19th & 20th centuries express authentic communist currents in human history.

FOUR

Finally, it is possible to conceive of conditions which would allow pre-class societies to develop into post-class societies without having to endure the miseries of class struggle; in other words, to skip the Marxist schema altogether. Had the European invasion of the Americas been delayed for a century or two, the native nations of north America (the Iroquois Federation in the northeast, the Six Civilized Nations of the southeast, the Hopi pueblos in the southwest, etc.) might have developed a continental organization and coordination of truly internationalist dimensions.

FIVE

A number of problems remain. What agency has maintained the condition of human exploitation historically, once primitive communism was subverted or destroyed? The dialectical dynamics of class society as Marx proposed have been found wanting as a sufficient explanation by many, but the current use of civilization as the scapegoat has proven equally lacking. In particular, the notion of civilization is extremely nebulous. What constitutes the basis for civilization? Hierarchy? Agriculture? Language? The whole anti-civilization debate has become an intellectual quagmire, replete with flawed assumptions, questionable methodologies and shaky conclusions.

SIX

Chief among the problems is the issue of scarcity. Scarcity exists in a number of forms, the first being natural scarcity. Certain resources may not exist in sufficient abundance to satisfy human needs and desires. Such natural scarcities are extremely few and for the most part can be dealt with by substituting other resources for the scarce ones. Artificial scarcity is more familiar, as it is the product of class society. Economic monopolies are only the most obvious sources of scarcity. For instance, diamonds would be as plentiful as grains of sand on a beach if it were not for the worldwide diamond cartel. But the very operation of class societies also produces scarcity. During the Middle Ages, when the nobility and clergy expropriated grain and labor from the peasant class, it was common for the peasantry to produce just enough to survive and no more. What little surplus was produced quickly disappeared into a smuggling economy. Similarly, when the Bolsheviks used the Red Army to confiscate

Green Communism Debate continued

grain from the Russian peasantry, all of the old feudal habits of that class reemerged. The abolition of class society would resolve this type of scarcity. Finally, there is the scarcity for want of a total liberatory social reality. One region of the world may lack water while another may have an abundance of it. One part of the global economy may not have sufficient productive capacity while another might have an over-abundance of it. If a classless, global community is not created, such scarcity will persist. This raises a final problem.

SEVEN

Is the impulse to abolish class society and create communism, as expressed historically through various social movements, a sufficient agency to achieve totality? Totality was a concept much used by Georg Lukacs, in his work **History and Class Consciousness**. Lukacs described capitalism as a totalizing agent. Not only does capitalism seek to expand globally, to create an all-encompassing world capitalist market, but it also seeks to invade and absorb every aspect of social and personal life. Capitalist domination presently reaches from the furthest recesses of the individual psyche to the aboriginal peoples at the outermost edges of global society. Capitalism has achieved totality; in other words, it has become a total, global social system. Lukacs also postulated that, prior to the totalizing force of the capitalist mode of production, no other mode of production possessed this dynamic. Pre-capitalist societies might have commercial components existing side by side with feudal and slave ones, no one component capable of the hegemony demonstrated by capitalism. Is the impulse to abolish class society sufficient by itself to achieve a global communism? Did insurrectionary Roman slaves or revolutionary peasants during the Middle Ages or rebellious indigenous peoples in the Americas seek to create an all-encompassing classless, global community?

EIGHT

The necessity for such an all-encompassing classless, global community has been made clear by other people. It is not possible to have communism in just one river valley or one bioregion any more than it is possible to build socialism in one country. So long as predatory capitalism exists anywhere in the world, a threat remains to the liberatory communist society that has taken hold on a limited scale.

NINE

The debate over progress thus is redefined. The Marxist conception of progress is obsolete on two points. There is no historical necessity for stages of economic development to maximize societys productive forces and eliminate scarcity. The working class capacity for self-emancipation does not depend on this, nor does it follow from industrial forms of organization that bring vast numbers of proletarians together under a single roof, subject to a unified form of economic organization. Both of these factors may be helpful, but they are not determinant. What is crucial is the consciousness of the working class as a class. However, consciousness in general and class consciousness in particular does not emerge out of a vacuum. It arises out of the material conditions of society. The question then becomes, can a movement for total liberation come out of a less than total mode of production? Is the impetus for a classless, global community dependent upon the material conditions produced by the global economic system of capitalism? The peasant revolts of the Middle Ages and the Reformation, in their millenarian fervor, shared several universal components with the Universal Church of the time. Yet they were not social movements for total liberation as witness the pogroms of Jews because of their religion that accompanied many of these revolts. Is our ability to conceive of a communism that is based in self interest and not mysticism, which is global and not regional in aspiration, and whose scope is not partial but total; is this necessarily the product of the present advanced, worldwide capitalist system in which we exist?

Reprinted from ***The Poor, The Bad And The Angry****. Write to: PO Box 3305, Oakland, CA 94609, USA. Ask for the publication by name on a separate note inside the envelope.*

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BACK ISSUES

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"THE BEST OF SUBVERSION"

A selection of articles from the first 11 issues. It costs £1.00 inc. p&p. Coming soon: **The Best of Subversion 2**: a selection of articles from issues 12 to 20. Advance orders welcome.

RECOMMENDED READING

If you like Subversion, you could also check out:

Organise! Journal of the ACF (Anarchist Communist Federation), c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

Wildcat Write to: BM Cat, London WC1N 3XX (don't mention Wildcat on the envelope)

Aufheben c/o Prior House, Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY.

A Ballad Against Work is a fascinating exploration of the day-to-day realities of wage labour in modern capitalist society. We intend to review this (free) pamphlet fully in the next issue of Subversion. Write to: Collectivities, Majdoor Library, Autopin Jhuggi, N.I.T., Faridabad 121001, INDIA.

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Subversion Web Site:
http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/8195

The Job Seekers Allowance... Dole Bondage? Up Yours!

The last few issues of Subversion (starting with no.18) have included several articles and letters on the fight against the Job Seekers Allowance, and the possibilities (if any) for joint action with Employment Service workers. We are publishing here two further contributions to the debates on these subjects: (below) a letter and article written by two Nottingham comrades, and (right) the Open Letter of Resignation from the Secretary of Wales Against the JSA.
[To save space a few footnotes etc. have been left out of the Open Letter].

Only Doing Your Job?

Dear Subversion

In our opinion the articles in issues 19 and 20 on the Job Seekers Allowance were valuable contributions to an understanding of this issue. If we could contribute a few words on the dole workers who are implementing the JSA. In some ways this appears to refer to the freedom versus determinism debate in philosophy: how much is our behaviour authentically free and how much is it determined by social circumstances? Some dole workers, and their supporters, appear to be arguing that they have no freedom at all over what do, "I'm only doing what I'm told." In a situation where trade union reformism is starkly revealed as an ideology and practice where it is seen as perfectly acceptable for one group of workers to progress by oppressing another group, it is worth looking at their arguments systematically. For ease of presentation we have done this in a question and answer format.

Why pick on me? It's not my fault if the Government have brought in the Job Seekers Allowance. I'm only doing what I'm told.

This is the sort of argument that junior civil servants in the Employment and Benefit Agencies use to try to justify

(continued on page 11)

It is now about two months since I ceased my involvement with the "Wales Against the JSA" (WAJSA) group...and two months since the JSA started to come into force. As I write this I still feel anger, disgust and disappointment at the path that WAJSA has chosen to take. I know other activists who dropped out at the same time share many (but not all) of my feelings (1).

The Decline and Fall of Wales Against the JSA

There had been several repeated attempts in the last 18 months or so to establish an anti JSA/unemployed action group in Cardiff. Activists around the local Trades Council had attempted to start a campaign, and the handful of local anarchists and Earth First!ers were planning to try an set up a "Groundswell" group ["Groundswell" is an autonomous 'national' network of anti-JSA and claimants action groups]. Amongst the Leftist groups in Cardiff, Militant Labour, the Socialist Labour Party, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty and Cymru Goch were all planning their own anti JSA activity. However, due to a crossover of activists/contacts the various initiatives were combined to form 'Wales Against the JSA' during the summer (2).

At first things appeared to auger well for the new group. Sectarian differences between the competing politicians seemed to have been put aside. For once it seemed that the ideological trenches had been abandoned. Even more hopeful was the apparent acceptance of the concept of direct action that had been brought to the group by the younger activists with experience in the recent anti-roads, anti-fascist and anti-Poll Tax struggles. Over 10 000 leaflets and posters were produced and distributed outside Job Centres; several thousand homes, in the area of Cardiff that several of us lived in, were leafleted door to door.

However once this routine had been established the first cracks in WAJSA's "unity" started to appear. Now that propaganda was being distributed proposals to back up this "promise of opposition" by starting direct action, were made. These suggestions were not (yet) rejected outright. Instead the political specialists of the various Leftist groups showed a reluctance to get involved themselves or to attempt to get information (such as the location of JSA implementation managers' offices) that might have enabled the rest of us to take some form of action despite our lack of numbers. Pickets/disruptions of Conservative MPs' and councillors' surgeries were discussed. When the relative scarcity of Tories in the area raised logistical problems it was suggested that we target Labour MPs and Councillors nearer by - this idea was hastily postponed by the Leftists who were/are still clinging to their ideas of "putting pressure on Labour" (not very much pressure obviously!).

Although still giving the idea of direct action some sort of lip service the Leftists began arguing for caution and deferment and were slipping back into their tried and tested (and failed) methods of protest - concentrating instead on "building a demo" and winning support from the Trade Unions. Crucially the Leftists saw the CPSA (the union of many Benefits Agency and Employment Service workers) as the key to success - not us unemployed. At this stage we still hoped to get numbers of unemployed people into the campaign, hoping that such an influx (even a small one) could swing the balance of WAJSA towards a more pro-active and less mediated strategy. Therefore, those of us arguing for action compromised for the sake of "unity".

As time progressed, it became clear (to some of us) that WAJSA hadn't. The date of the demo, and of the implementation of the JSA loomed closer. WAJSA were facing a potentially disastrous demonstration. Most of those arguing strongest for the march (as opposed to

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(1) Of a group that never consisted of more than 20, 7 or 8 of us quit more or less simultaneously, over roughly the same issues. Unfortunately our experience with WAJSA has left us with little enthusiasm or energy to establish any alternative.
(2) Although the activists were almost exclusively based in Cardiff the couple who weren't and the various groups involved (using their contacts/numbers) hoped to spread WAJSA across Wales (this never really happened, although the group remained in contact with scattered people across South Wales).

JOB SEEKERS ALLOWANCE
Only Doing Your Job?

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their part in enforcing this oppressive measure. The officials behind the counters in local dole offices claim that this is unfair for them to be targeted by their angry clients. They say that they are not personally responsible for the polices which attack the poor. Thus they cannot be held to blame. But this defence does not hold water. If someone knowingly and willingly does bad things, even if that person was not the originator of the policy, then this is wrong. The fact that those immediately implementing the JSA did not dream it up makes no difference. Unemployed people are being oppressed by 'the system' but implementing the system are people who have names and addresses.

If I don't do it someone else will.

Maybe, but another person acting wrongly is no justification for doing the same thing yourself. Two wrongs don't make a right.

I'm not getting paid much to do it; some dole office workers receive a benefit top-up themselves.

If doing something is bad then it does not matter how much you get paid for doing it. It's still bad if you do it for a lot of money or nothing at all.

I try to give a bit of advice to the people I have to deal with.

This is just self deception. Trying to justify implementing the JSA by saying that you water it down a bit won't wash. You are still enforcing a fundamentally unjust and bad policy. Smiling at the victim just adds insult to injury.

I'm a good trade unionist who's gone on strike to demand my bosses give me adequate protection from angry clients.

All you are worried about is yourself. There is nothing virtuous about taking industrial action in support of a bad cause. Trade union action taken to try to make it easier to implement anti-working class measures is no good. (Benefit workers need screens when the dole offices already have 'hot links' to the police, are covered in closed circuit TV cameras and patrolled by thuggish security guards? It might appear to some that it is the claimants who are being intimidated.)

If I refuse to enforce the JSA I'll lose my job.

This is possible but there are some things more important than having a job: like integrity. Anyway you could try to get a transfer to another part of the Civil Service or move out into another job. Sure, this is not easy with mass unemployment but if you go along with the JSA where will it lead? Rounding up unemployed people and putting them into work camps? (The already piloted Project Work is a straight slave labour scheme). Deporting those originating from abroad? Where will this creeping fascism end? At the Nuremburg trials the usual defence of those who participated in the Nazi extermination programme was: "I was only doing my job." As a matter of history the Nuremburg court dismissed the, 'I was only obeying orders' defence as illegitimate.

Also, this type of argument is an insult to many people on the dole who have refused to take scab jobs (and been attacked by benefit workers for not doing so). The unemployed workers who have refused to take the jobs of the Liverpool dockers, in an area where unemployment can last a lifetime, should be commended for obeying basic working class principles of solidarity at no little cost to themselves. In an environment where trade unionists routinely cross picket lines such struggles indicate important pockets of resistance to capitalist oppression. But it is not just actual scab jobs. Why should unemployed people be thought of as some kind of sub-humans (Untermenschen) for whom any kind of McJob or dubious work will do? If someone does not want to attack poor and vulnerable people by becoming a debt collector then they should be supported. If someone does not want to attack unemployed people by becoming a Restart 'tutor', a job which entails becoming a part of the propaganda offensive which attempts to blame the unemployed themselves for unemployment rather than the irrational capitalist economic system, then they should be supported. If someone simply does not want to work for trash wages at a pizza outlet then they should be commended not condemned.

Lower echelon dole and SS workers have always occupied a contradictory class location. Whilst being subject to oppression and relative low pay themselves they have, nevertheless, exercised an important supervisory role over unemployed working class people. With the implementation of the JSA the role of 'frontline' staff at the dole office has been changed for them from one of administration to much more of a policing role. For example, the Job Seekers Directive. It is ridiculous to imagine that claimants can have unity with dole office staff who can collect a bounty for 'shopping' them. Performance related pay means that the dole workers will have a financial incentive to disallow claims. Serious anti-JSA groupings need to confront the fact that workers operate in conflict, as well as unity, in order that they can genuinely represent the interests of the unemployed in any intra-class conflictual situation. If people want to try to make themselves all right by abusing others, then they should not be too surprised if those abused sometimes bite back.

Two comrades from Nottingham.

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direct action) seemed to be the least to build it. There was (not surprisingly) little support from the Trade Unions. Given this, it was suggested that because of a very real possibility that a minuscule turnout for what was being built up by WAJSA as an "All Wales/National demonstration" it might be less damaging to the anti-JSA campaign to either cancel the demo or consider alternative plans. A tiny march would be a display of weakness by WAJSA which could result in a total lack of credibility which we desperately needed. However for many of the leftists the demonstration was, in effect, both the culmination/peak of the campaign in some ways and the campaign itself amounted to the demo, and pleas to the "labour movement". As it turned out, around 150 people, mainly members of the various Leftist groups, trudged around Cardiff city centre in a pathetic spectacle, that at best bemused the Saturday shoppers.

CPSA? No Way!

By this point, an even greater problem had developed within WAJSA. Myself, and most of the other activists had effectively dropped out in disillusion and frustration.

Efforts to woo local CPSA activists by the leftists had finally paid off and several Union reps turned up for the weekly WAJSA meeting. This was seen as good news by the many who hoped it would herald a new phase for the campaign. BUT it actually caused the effective death of the sickly since birth WAJSA group.

The CPSA reps showed up and almost immediately launched into an unprovoked and hysterical verbal attack on me and other activists. They accused several of us of plotting physical assaults upon their union members and refused to listen to attempts on our part to explain ourselves. It was obvious that they were reacting to circulars they had seen about "Groundswell" and the "3 strikes" policy (3). WAJSA was technically part of the Groundswell network - although in practice all this meant was that Groundswell mailings were passed around at the start of meetings. The "3 strikes" tactic had never been mentioned in WAJSA before, never mind discussed or actually planned (4).

The CPSA seemed to take little comfort in this. They then responded equally negatively to all prospects for mutually acceptable action. The idea of BA/ES workers refusing to do JSA work was dismissed as "ultra left nonsense" by a CPSA member and ex-SWPie, who then declared that she would rather union members implemented the JSA than scabs (5). Suggestions to target the (mutual enemy) management, and perhaps occupy their offices, were denounced as "Mickey mouse terrorism" by a Militant member. The CPSA then stated that they would call the police if we leafleted inside the Job Centre. The Leftists who had previously supported the idea of "direct action" backed the CPSA all the way...

In a scenario that reminded me of arguments with 'fluffies' during the anti CJA struggles - it seemed that those preaching unity and tolerance the loudest were those causing the most division and being the most intolerant of other peoples ideas.

I found myself the secretary of a group whose strategy, tactics, (and the ideologybehind it) I was becoming increasingly opposed to. WAJSA's near fetishisation of the CPSA and its 'struggle' had placed it in a position that, it could be argued, was open collaboration with people who: on one hand were willing (reluctantly or not) to carry out the latest of the Government's attacks; and on the other hand acting as a bureaucratic block upon militant action (by us and perhaps by workers in the BA/ES). The CPSA has instead embarked upon a series of one day strikes. Such a strategy is near useless as effective resistance - it does however provide a way of making militant workers harmlessly let off steam [I was put on JSA during one of these one day strikes so they are obviously not that effective]. These strikes were also not against the JSA but for security screens to protect them from us. At the same time the CPSA were distributing circulars denouncing the Groundswell network, happily playing along with the Government's divide and rule tactics.

It would obviously have been to our advantage to have had good operational links with the BA and ES workers. But abstract calls for "unity" and "solidarity" are futile unless there is something concrete to base that unity on, and mutual actions of solidarity. No matter how many empty gestures of support and platitudes are made, the reality of the antagonistic relationships between claimant and dole worker remains to be overcome.

Effective solidarity between claimants and dole workers may well be possible, and I genuinely hope that this is happening in other anti JSA groups. Such hopes, however, cannot be allowed to confine or define the activities of these groups as they have in Cardiff. Any grounds for building such solidarity here seem to have been sabotaged by the CPSA. The attitude of the CPSA representatives was disgraceful. They showed little or no interest in trying to actually stop (or even disrupt) the JSA. At best they were merely concerned with saving their own skins from justifiably angry and desperate claimants. At worst they got involved in order to neuter the campaign and prevent any sort of militant action. Instead of solidarity they seemed to arrive with a totally hostile attitude to the campaign.

The Leftists in the campaign (with the exception of the younger SLP members) fell

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(3) For example the CPSA's "three strikes and you're out" memo to their ES section in Leeds condemning "various fringe anti - JSA groups around the country operating under the banner of Groundswell".
(4) Having said this, I discussed three strikes with some of those who dropped out and the feeling amongst many of us is, maybe we should have advocated three strikes from the start!
(5) Despite the SWP's (relative) strength in the CPSA in Cardiff, they were conspicuous by their absence from WAJSA apart from the usual placards and papers on the demo. They did have a couple of members show up, but only as representatives of the CPSA. One long term SWPer explained to me that their absence was due to the fact that they'd "had enough of meetings and that during the poll tax".

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in behind the CPSA. This was partly due to their own Party lines of "pressure the Unions" etc., but it was also down to the composition of membership (actual and potential): white collar, public service workers. When it came to the crunch they chose to side with their own kind as opposed to the "lumpenproletariat" unemployed.

One argument used in defence of the CPSA and BA/ES workers is that they should not be held personally responsible (either individually or collectively) because "they are only doing their jobs". "Only doing my job" has never been a justification or an excuse for anti working class behaviour - which implementing the JSA indisputably is. The same Leftists making excuses for BA/ES workers have no hesitation in (rightly) holding scabs, bailiffs etc. responsible for their actions. I realise that BA/ES workers did not choose to implement the JSA when they first took their job. However they should not have been in much doubt as to the repressive nature of their job (although I accept that they were probably not aware of just what degree of repression). I also accept that using this line of argument, it could be claimed that anyone who engages in any economic activity (waged labour, buying, even stealing) may be playing a role in the "reproduction of capital" and therefore acting in a manner which is (ultimately) anti working class. But there are obviously degrees of intent and consciousness of the nature of my particular activity. Scabbing is qualitatively and quantitatively more consciously and explicitly anti proletarian than working for the dole has been. However the comparison between dole worker and scab or bailiff will, and has, been made by claimants who the BA/ES workers by their actions act in a repressive manner toward.

I am not arguing that, because of this, BA/ES workers should bear the full brunt of anti-JSA resistance. Rather, that while I would welcome any BA/ES worker who is genuinely interested in fighting the JSA; the CPSA have no right and are in no position to turn up to anti-JSA meetings and start making demands of the people that they are going to be attacking as their job (and then have the arrogance/ignorance and insensitivity to deny they are doing anything "wrong"). They cannot simply pass the buck to "The Tories". They have to accept responsibility for the position that they are in and the function they will perform i.e. the nature of their work, before there can be any basis upon which to plan meaningful mutual action and solidarity.

Unfortunately in Cardiff such solidarity, as we have seen, has been made near impossible by the stance of the CPSA. WAJSA was left with a choice as to whose side it was really on - it seems to have chosen to act more like a CPSA support group than an anti JSA group.

The Role of the Cardiff Unemployed Workers' Centre

Another point of confusion (but not outright conflict) was the nature of the relationship with the local TUC Unemployed Workers' Centre which was being established simultaneously by several people in WAJSA.

Whilst some WAJSA activists had reservations about the Centre, most of us raised no objections and, indeed, saw the Centre as a potentially good thing and even got involved. It was, however, agreed to keep the Centre and WAJSA strictly separate in a formal sense, despite the overlap in personnel. Unfortunately some people could not keep the two separate - using WAJSA to build the Centre. This caused a problem (as well as general confusion) when it was realised that some of the actions being proposed might jeopardise the centre's desired funding from the TUC and the local Labour council. It was suggested that people involved in the Centre "refrain" from anti JSA activity - when it became clear that people would, if pushed, drop the Centre rather than campaigning this matter was dropped.

Unfortunately the illusions that some involved in the Centre had in the Trade Union movement - to the virtual exclusion of everything else - meant that the dispute within WAJSA was reproduced at the Centre with the result that some of those who had walked out of WAJSA also quit the Centre.

I'm So Bored With the JSA

In addition to these problems the Leftists within WAJSA seemed hell bent on turning campaign activity into a chore. Meetings and activity became boring and lifeless. Suggestions of getting a "pop group" to play at an anti JSA rally were accepted - but the Leftists showed more enthusiasm when they were discussing which politician or bureaucrat they wanted to give a speech. They seemed to be under the impression that a Labour MP would be more of an attraction than the Manic Street Preachers...How can we expect anyone else to get involved in our campaigns if we make our own activities so mind-numbingly boring and banal?

Career Opportunities

"Is it worth the aggravation, to find yourself a job when there's nothing worth working for?" - Oasis, "Cigarettes and Alcohol"

Another potential source of dispute within the anti JSA movement(s) is the issue of work.

Those anti JSA campaigners orientated towards the TUC (and therefore this includes most of the Leftist groups) are campaigning around the slogan of "Jobs Not JSA". This may seem like a reasonable demand to many liberal/Leftist campaigners who are in work. However most unemployed activists realise that (because of the experience of our daily lives) the JSA is designed to give people jobs. One major plank of the JSA is force the unemployed into work. Albeit not the kind of work that the TUC et al would campaign for. Jobs with such poor conditions and low wages that even those who believe in the dignity of labour would see the (pre JSA) dole as a preferable option. In such circumstances to "raise the demand" of "Jobs Not JSA" is both in bad taste and patently absurd.

However, we do not have a scenario of the mass refusal of work. Benefit levels have been pushed so low that living on social security is not something that is commonly done out of choice (6). Never Work! is not an option -

just an unpleasant reality for many who have been left 'on the scrapheap' by capitalist restructuring. More than 20 years of such restructuring has created vast numbers of enforced unemployed and simultaneously has driven down benefit levels.

It must also be noted that if the current attacks are successful and the experiments in workfare are generalised - then we will be working even when we are on the dole.

Do They Owe Us A Living?

Obviously any campaign/group/movement that hopes to develop a successful strategy to resist the JSA has to have some analysis of the JSA and place it in context. Without this any strategy against the JSA will also be out of context and therefore almost certainly doomed to fail on its own terms.

Unfortunately too many liberals and Leftists involved in WAJSA have made little attempt to place the JSA in context. Some merely see it as an unprovoked attack upon the unemployed/low waged, made because of malice upon the part of "The Tories" and/or as a means of reducing social security spending in order to give pre election tax cuts. No doubt the government will milk as much electoral propaganda as it can out of "cutting spending - cutting taxes" and "clamping down on dole scroungers". But the JSA was not introduced in an attempt to swing a few floating votes - this is merely a bonus.

Others have identified the JSA as the latest in a series of attacks upon the working class. Unfortunately this analysis was not followed through and was left as an almost moralistic view. Only seeing it as an attempt by 'The Tories' to drive down wages and conditions with no explanation as to why...other than painting it in simplistic "Tories and Bosses versus labour movement" battle terms. Viewing it on this level has left the Leftist groups pursuing the usual tortuous arguments about pressurising the Labour/TUC readerships and talk of "anger at the Tories". Given the Labour Party's (and TUC's) current and historical support for measures along the lines of the JSA, the bankruptcy of this strategy and analysis should surely be obvious [Both the Labour Party and the TUC have supported "work camps" for the unemployed in the past]..

I make no claim to present a complete, or even particularly incisive analysis of the JSA. But, I will make a few observations that will hopefully provide a modest contribution to the debate.

The JSA is only a part of an international trend. Across the world governments are introducing various forms of "austerity measure"; we only have to look at recent struggles in France, Greece, Belgium, Spain, Germany, Denmark, Canada and Australia (to name but a few) to see how widespread and varied these measures are (and the resistance to them). In the EU these measures are often in the guise of striving to meet the self-imposed conditions for EMU - the reality of this is an attempted crack down on wages, conditions and spending across the EU. The JSA is one part of the British governments' strategy to shift to a lower waged economy with a smaller and more restrictive welfare state.

This international shift by Capital follows the destruction of the post war "Keynesian' compromise. In an attempt to pacify the "revolting" international working class Capital pursued a policy of "full" employment, rising living standards, higher wages etc. However the revolts of the late 60s and early 70s wrecked this policy. Proletarians had TVs, fridges and holidays in the sun but they still weren't happy! The combativity of the working class forced Capital into a crisis. Capital has responded with "long term austerity with the purpose of enforcing work".

"The purpose of the capitalist strategy is to tilt the relationship between unpaid and paid labour, between capital and wage, back to a position that forcibly re establishes the pre-eminence of unpaid over paid labour." - Midnight Notes, *Midnight Oil*, 1992.

More work - less money.

Capital launched a massive attack upon wages and conditions coupled with the deliberate creation of mass unemployment. Simultaneously an equally massive attack was launched upon the rapidly increasing levels of benefit.

Given the militant resistance some governments are facing to their austerity measures - and the memory of the way in which working class revolt destroyed the Keynesian compromise before it - the JSA is also useful for the British government in the way that it will divide and weaken the working class. The relationship between some claimants and some dole workers illustrated in this letter is a graphic example of this. The JSA will also, as has been seen by the Left, weaken collective action by workers because of increasing pressure upon the unemployed to take any job, including scabbing, and the increased fear of unemployment for those in work. Such a weakened and scared working class will prove easier to inflict further attacks upon.

It is interesting to note that most of the effective struggles in recent years have been outside (and sometimes against) the traditional cops of the Left/Trade Union leaderships. In Britain the anti-roads, anti-Poll Tax, anti-Live Exports movements, the Liverpool Dockers, Reclaim The Streets, postal service wildcats etc. (and lorry drivers actions EU wide) show hints of a small, but potentially significant shift towards struggle outside the agreed lines of the TU/Left methods of one day strikes and days of action. These trends and the links/generalisations being made between

the various struggles could prove an explosive headache for the Government when the next wave of attacks are introduced.

Of course, the current "crisis of representation" does not mean that the Left and the Unions have lost their ability to recuperate struggles - as the example of the miners in 1992 or the CPSA's current strategy show. Indeed the Unions and the

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(6) Currently changes to Housing Benefit are proving equally effective in attacking the unemployed. In my case I can handle the JSA (so far!) but housing benefit changes have effectively cut my giro by around ten pounds a week. It is also interesting to note that these changes follow hot on the heels of the squatting laws in the CJA.

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labour movement are capable of a shift "left" if they need to, the Unions seem to be doing this in the current Renault dispute. The launch of the SLP in Britain may possibly provide a left cover for such during a Blair government...then again it may not.

The JSA cannot be looked at in isolation:

"To fight on single issues in isolation is to fall into a carefully prepared trap - we cannot even win the argument." - Larry Law, "The Bad Days Will End", *Spectacular Times*, 1983

The JSA is part of a generalised attack upon our class. Our response has to be equally generalised.

The conclusion I have drawn from all this is that the implosion of WAJSA (as a campaigning group) was a product of the political poverty of the Left. As such its failure is liable to be reproduced in any similar "united front". Each of the conflicts about tactics, the CPSA, the Labour Party etc. sprang from ignorance of the reality of everyday life in the social factory for large sections of our class who do not work in stable, organised, unionised workplaces (or who do not work at all) coupled with a failure to place the JSA within the context of an international, generalised and long-term strategic assault upon the working class. The vacuum left by this lack of analysis was filled by the tired ideas of the Leftists that have made many a struggle impotent. The lack of understanding of the intra-class conflicts that the JSA was designed to inflame led to the application of so-called workerist ideas. Unfortunately the only workers the Left seemed to see were the CPSA and their "struggle". WAJSA's tactics were also designed to appeal towards the TUC/Labour Party and those who have illusions in them. Unfortunately decades of pandering to such illusions has left the Left unable to raise themselves above "Trade Union Consciousness". Such a futile strategy has left WAJSA unable to win even its own limited goals - the defence of the status quo...and they wonder why the unemployed and low-waged ignore them.

"There is a certain kind of professional who claims to represent us...the MPs, the Communist Party, the Union leaders, the social workers, the old-old left...All these people presumed to act upon our behalf. All of these people have certain things in common...THEY always sell out...THEY are all afraid of us...THEY'LL preach towards keeping the peace...and we are bored...poor and very tired of keeping the peace...To believe that OUR struggle could be

restricted to the channels provided to us by the pigs, WAS THE GREATEST CON. And we started hitting them." - Angry Brigade Communique 7, 18 March 1971.

Wales Against the JSA is dead, the Left carry on - ever get the feeling you've been conned?

S. B.
(ex-Secretary, WAJSA)
December 1996

For those of you thinking about getting a job...Part 2

In Subversion 21 we published a "Modest Suggestion Regarding The Targetting Of Key Economic Sectors By Troublemaking Types". This follow-up reflects some of the discussions which the original article generated within Subversion.

Having had discussions with the rest of the Subversion group it now seems that there is in fact little objection to my article of the previous issue. Certainly the claim of "disagreements of a serious nature" has been found to be illusory.

However, it does seem appropriate that I briefly examine the objections that were originally made to the article and that I elaborate some things which seem not to have been clear.

Key Sectors

There was a lot of problem with this phrase amongst the group. Even though I explained in the original article that all I meant by this phrase was jobs where some level of class conflict seemed to be going on, where this struggle has the potential to further radicalise the workers involved. If people support the struggle of the productive, or toiling, class against the owning class then it makes sense that they get into situations where this struggle is a daily reality, for their own sanity if nothing else!

Obviously moving from one job to another will become more difficult as you get older, which is why I should really have said in the original article that this was an appeal to younger people (under 40 years or so perhaps). But moving jobs is not as difficult as some people make out, unless you don't want to lose the high "middle-class" wages, or comfy little job, that you can currently command!

Under and Over

It was suggested that I "underestimated" the personal and practical dificulties for revolutionaries in targetting certain jobs. However, just because something may be a little difficult that does not make it an invalid thing to do. This kind of objection smacks of guilt! Obviously it will be easier for younger people to make sure they mess up any chance they have of getting a good and "socially worthy" career before it is too late.

It was also suggested that I "overestimated" the influence of what would (at this time) be fairly marginal shifts in the work locations of

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Getting A Job..Part 2

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revolutionaries. However, a few revolutionaries in one particular industry can have a big effect. When, in the past, revolutionaries have started to become a presence in workplaces they have usually had an influence seemingly out of proportion to their numbers. In this respect it is useful to look at the influence "rank-and-file" groups (their dodgy union politics aside) have had in the past.

I think it would be good to encourage the building of a culture amongst radicals in which we took jobs for the potential to escalate the class struggle rather than taking jobs for the money or an easy life.

Greed and Gluttony

It was also suggested that I was arguing for the creation of some sort of "super militant" "professional elite" who sacrificed their own needs and desires to the need for "the organisation" to have influence. However, I'm not arguing that any "organisation" should seek to increase its influence in our class in this respect, only that individual revolutionaries should seek to increase their influence - it is only natural that revolutionaries will already be in contact with each other, what would be interesting would be when they start acting in a unified way at their workplaces. At present there is no "organisation of revolutionary workers" to speak of, this will only come about through joint activity and positive intervention in class struggles.

As for sacrificing our own needs and desires, this turn of phrase makes it sound like our needs and desires are different to those we espouse in our publications. If our needs and desires are somehow "anti-working class" then we've gone badly wrong somewhere in our life!

The purpose of my article was to stir up some t hought amongst our readers as to what type of work they are doing or might be considering to do. That's all.

Northern Ireland, the IRA and the class war

Correspondence with a member of London Class War, part 3

You are still not trying to understand what I'm saying, which is amusing when you say "we have never claimed to be Marxist or Anarchist, and if that means people find it harder to put a neat label on us, tough". Your efforts to avoid a label is strange considering the absolutely dogmatic line you have got. My point is that dogmatic lines are NEVER revolutionary ones because no matter how hard you try you have to bend the 'real world, real people and real events' to fit your definitions.

I asked for evidence of the IRA's anti-working class programme, and instead you gave Sinn Fein's. Sinn Fein is not the IRA. Although there are overlaps. You are treating very diverse groups of peoples as if they as a whole form a united Republican movement. This is not the case. There are people on the ground in Northern Ireland who believe very different things, a bit like the British anarchist movement.

By the way, I do think Nationalism per se is wrong, as is money and religion. Thanks for telling me that "your problem is that you don't think nationalism per se is counter revolutionary". It's something I'd obviously never considered...(did you get the sarcasm?).

I never admitted that "if Germany had won the war you would support Britain". You are not listening to what I'm saying and you do not understand what I'm trying to say either.

What I actually said was "if Germany had won World War 2 and we were subject to an imperialist occupation, and we had managed to get a huge bomb to go off in the finacial heart of Berlin. Would you be happy? I know I would."

The "we" in this case is not a cross class category and was certainly never intended to imply that I support Britain, but is rather a category which includes the working class as a whole, 'our people'. Because it is always the working class who suffers most in Imperialist occupations.

So, I regard imperialism as occupying working class turf, and if a bomb in the financial centre of Berlin would lessen the suffering of our people then so much the better.

You have not directly answered a lot of my other points either. The crucial point is where I began "WHAT ARE the actions you would support against the next example of British Imperialist aggressions that always lead to working class catholic deaths or injury..." In a local position where calling on people with guns to get marauding loyalists or British army out of the area or at least scare them away would help. YOU WOULD JUST SIT THERE AND SAY "THE IRA ARE MURDERING SCUM". And condemn a local working class comunity not to defend itself.

Because you have a need to impose a dogmatic line on people whose conditions of struggle are exceptional. It is not me who has blurred the lines, it is you who are creating ones which do not relate to concrete problems facing the catholic working class community.

I'll try to say this as plainly as I can, you do not have the right nor the credibility to dismiss extraordinary conditions that there are in Northern Ireland. You are refusing to say what you would do in conditions of intense class struggle, and are instead opting for the typical position of the sad British left. Of merely trying to 'explain' to all us dumb fucks who cannot see what's going on. You do this in order to define what is the only "concrete struggle of the working class

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fighting for working class interests". I know there are revolutionaries in Northern Ireland who fight for working class interests, occasionally the threat of guns has to be there otherwise their people would get walked over. REAL revolutionaries do not allow that to happen, or at least they try to stop it. You see, real revolutionaries try to intervene.

This obsesion with explaining the world and not setting the agenda has held the anarchist communist movement back for at least 100 years. You see you can never hope to be of revolutionary importance if you sit on the sidelines explaining how the world is to all us dumb fucks who actually do something. You have to be there with the class in

concrete struggles or else you are at best academic posers with inflated vision of your own worth.

Which gets me back to the bottom line, revolutionaries respect/give conditional support to initiatives taken towards self management and violent resistance to capitalist states. Predominantly by the people, and not their 'political' leadership. THIS NEVER implies support for nationalism, or capitalism and it IS STUPIDITY to assert that it does. In fact, it is ignorance of concrete conditions that leads to those ideas. To resist the aggressors is one of the fundamental principles of revolutionary politics. I am not denying that what started out as'liberation movements' ended up by being capitalists, but perhaps this is because of the likes of you who want no role in these movements. Because you are too pure to 'involve yourselves'. People in struggle have ideological choices to make and it is up to revolutionaries to help in this process. IF YOU CHOOSE TO OPT OUT, like other groups do, you cannot claim to be revolutionary.

Picture the scene, there's a world wide revolution in progress, in Northern Ireland the boys with guns are riding around shooting the capitalists, the IRA are on top of the barricade about to launch the final attack on British military HQ in Belfast. The bloke from Subversion turns up and says the "IRA are murdering scum". You've lost the plot comrades...

By the way, just to disappoint you even more I'm not one of your regular readers because I avoid magazines that only explain the world. I read books and magazines which try to change the world and which will help take the working class to political power. As Marx said, the point has always been to change the world...

Subversion Reply

You begin your letter by accusing Subversion of dogma. Our response to this is to suggest you look at your political beliefs and discover what you would hold on to in moments of extremis and what you would shed? Subversion has a set of PRINCIPLES that we all adhere to. These are based on many years of political activity and discussion and our observations of the real world. They are not plucked out of thin air. It is what we share and consider to be the basis of any political agreement. We see them as essential as a basis for our revolutionary ideas. Actions not based on principles soon easily become entangled with pro state activities....So we suggest you get real and get thinking.

Your level of naiveté is stunning! Sinn Fein is not the IRA!! Of course it is. What on earth is it if it's not that? Any group aspiring to take over a state such as the IRA does must have recourse to a political process just as the Governments of the world all have their own armies...or perhaps it should be the other way around since armies need governments. Sinn Fein aspires to the same ultimate end as the IRA, that is control over the working class of Ireland for the production of profit. One tackles this control through the ballot box the other through the gun.

I think you should seriously think about the consequences of letting off bombs in any city centre. You obviously have no experience of this, since, if you did, your attitude would be a little more thought out. You are as guilty as the state's producers of Jingoistic shit as they encourage the use of the bomb, rocket and mortar to kill the enemy who they see as less than human. The consequences of bombing a city centre are that working class people get it worst of all. In Belfast, the IRA bombed the bus station. Working class people were going to school, work and home. It was working class people's bodies that were shovelled into black plastic bags. Does that really make you happy?

You ask us what actions we would support? Those of us who were active at the time supported Free Derry as this was a clear situation of working class people defending themselves against attack by the 'B' Specials and unionist hate mobs. At the time IRA stood not for the Irish Republican Army but for the "I Ran Aways". We do support the protection of people from assaults, burnings, kneecappings, punishment beatings, extortion and so on. We say these activities go on on all sides in N. Ireland. The British army use violence to intimidate a section of the population in rebellion. The paramilitaries see themselves as the local state in the areas they control. They can't lock convicts up because they don't have prisons so they break people's knees or expel them to the mainland. Don't tell us these organisations are based on equality as we aim revolutionary groups to be. Bombing city centres doesn't stop these assaults going on.

Your reference to what we would do in a position of intense class struggle seems out of place. There is very little positive, collective, class struggle going on in N.Ireland. The struggle has been subsumed beneath a classic situation of divide and rule. This situation suits the governments of both countries very well. A class divided against itself does not have the physical or mental energies to fight the real enemies. Why do you think Major kept the 'peace process' so strung out? When groups of people are in struggle we don't ask which organisation they are from provided we agree with the basic tenets of the struggle. We are not supporting the organisation but rather the furthering of the struggle against our common capitalist enemy.

I ask you to picture THIS scene. The working class is fighting against the capitalists as part of the international communist revolution. And where is the IRA? Not on the side of the workers. If the IRA still exists it will be on the same side as all existing states and would-be states.

The IRA doesn't want the same as we do. They want to take control and just as Subversion never says support the Labour Party because they say they'll defend our rights, in the same way we say don't support the IRA. Both are part of the state and are therefore anti-working class.

We feel that this correspondence has gone on for some time and that neither we nor our correspondent has any more new ideas to add. Therefore this is the last we wish to say

(continued from page 18)

Moderation is a mindset that finds its wellspring in the idea that the state is in some sense NEUTRAL - an impartial arbiter standing above and apart from social conflict. Given the dockers' own experiences at the hands of the police and previous articles in the Dockers' Charter on the role of the police, such 'moderation' on their part is a little surprising to say the least.

Let us state the number one lesson for revolutionaries: THE STATE IS NOT NEUTRAL. It cannot be persuaded. It cannot be reasoned with. It doesn't have our interests at heart - only those of our rulers. It will not hesitate to use whatever violence it sees fit in order to crush opposition.

The ideas of 'Justice', 'Democracy' etc. are just con tricks to keep us poor slaves happy.

THERE IS NO JUSTICE - JUST US!

There's No Justice!

The March for Social Justice, the Cops and the Riot

The "March for Social Justice" on April 12th illustrates well the contradictions involved in the struggle of the Liverpool Dockers and the broader movement of which it is part.

There is for instance the title of the march and the "people's charter for social justice" to which it is linked - an attempt to take the struggle down a straightforwardly reformist, i.e. bourgeois democratic path.

However, in this article I want to talk specifically about the violent confrontation (the 'riot', 'mini-riots' whatever people want to call it) between some of the demonstrators and the cops and some of the response to it.

Some people who consider themselves on the said of the working class struggle nonetheless saw fit to condemn those working class people who fought with the cops, accusing them of 'spoiling' what was a 'peaceful event' or words to that effect.

Subversion's position is quite clear. We fully support working class resistance to the police, the state and the ruling class, whatever form that takes, violent or otherwise.

On the other hand, we are well aware of the need for violence to be on our own terms and our own 'turf' - some violence on demos has frankly been stupid from a tactical point of view. (These ideas were well explored in the recent 'Hungry Brigade' leaflet.)

We further recognize that the more the class struggle escalates, the more the ruling class will resort to violent suppression - our class has to be prepared to meet fire with fire.

It is to be expected that all manner of liberals and moderates will raise their voices in outrage whenever the working class uses violent means. This includes a significant part of those false-friends of the class, the left.

The 'cancer of moderation' also exists among some of the dockers themselves, and among a part of Reclaim the Streets, which is a somewhat amorphous group containing a significant liberal element alongside a class-struggle element.

And if the local Liverpool Daily Post is all to be believed, this attitude has been expressed in no uncertain terms by Mike Carden, a leader of the dockers' struggle widely respected among the dockers involved.

It quotes his words as follows:
"Those people who caused the trouble have nothing to do with the dockers. We don't want them on our demonstrations. We're disgusted at the way they behaved.

"It was very sad and it blighted what should have been a peaceful day ...
"We didn't see much of the trouble because we were at the front of the march. But we were surrounded by riot police and kept in the Trafalgar Square area for over an hour. My son was very frightened...
"The first we knew of trouble was when we saw a flare set off in Downing Street, but we still didn't know how far things had gone.
"We've always had good relations with environmental groups. But if we find Reclaim the Streets were involved, we'll sever links with it."
(Daily Post, Monday April 14th, page 13)

It has been suggested that the above comments are a distortion of Mike Carden's views, but it is difficult to see what 'context' could excuse it. Unless it is a straight fabrication by the Daily Post.

Whatever the truth of the above, the dockers' stewards have given their official statement in the Dockers' Charter #15. In this, although they blame the police and the press (with some justification), they still bemoan the fact that the 'peaceful objectives' of the march were thwarted, and declare their support for 'democratic principles' and 'justice'.

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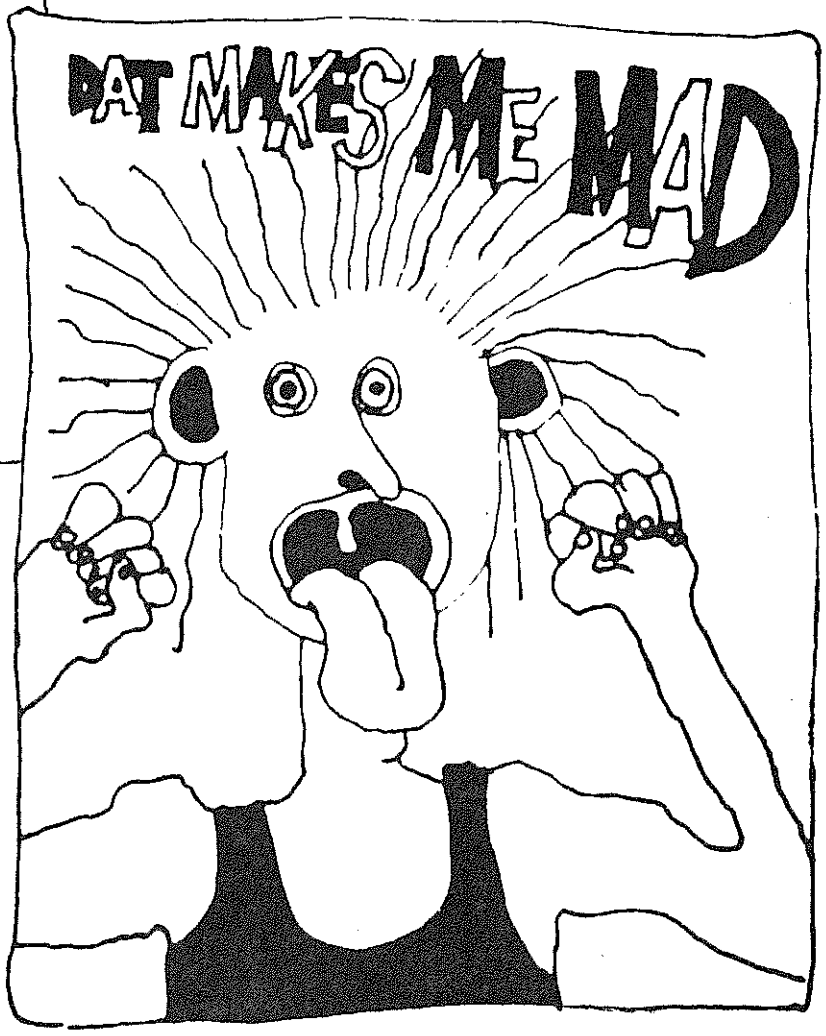

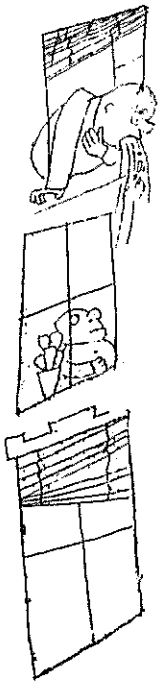

Capitalism makes us puke!

Find out why starting on p14!

Introduction to Subversion 23

Most of this issue of **Subversion** is taken up with articles and correspondence around the theme of class composition and the relationship between different sections of the working class in the course of struggle. Some of the earlier background to this can be found in issues no. 21 and 22 (copies still available) and in sections of **The Second Best of Subversion**.

We think this is an important theme for discussion amongst revolutionaries which needs to be based, whenever possible, on experience and knowledge gained in the actual practice of the class struggle (and not just in Britain!). Because everyone's experience is inevitably partial, attempts at generalisation are equally inevitably limited in value. By bringing these together in debate and testing them in practice we hope to learn as we go along!

Articles and correspondence have been selected with this approach in mind (even when they do occasionally contain unnecessary patronising remarks or name-calling!). We should stress again that signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of Subversion. Also, whilst our group does discuss and seek agreement on unsigned articles it does not follow that every member agrees with every comment in such articles.

We have decided not to publish in this issue further contributions we have received on the subject of Green Anarchism/Communism, but if you are interested in this continuing debate we can photocopy the further correspondence for you (send 50p in postage stamps).

What We Stand For

We meet regularly for political discussion and to organise our activities. The following is a brief description of our basic political principles:

We are against all forms of capitalism; private, state and self-managed.

We are for communism, which is a classless society in which all goods are distributed according to needs and desires.

We are actively opposed to all ideologies which divide the working class, such as religion, sexism and racism.

We are against all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" movements such as the IRA.

The working class (wage labourers, the unemployed, housewives, etc.) is the revolutionary class; only its struggle can liberate humanity from scarcity, war and economic crisis.

Trade unions are part of the capitalist system, selling our labour power to the bosses and sabotaging our struggles. We support independent working class struggle, in all areas of life under capitalism, outside the control of the trade unions and all political parties.

We totally oppose all capitalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. We are against participation in fronts with these organisations.

We are against participation in parliamentary elections; we are for the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class and the establishmentof organisations of working class power.

We are against sectarianism, and support principled co-operation among revolutionaries.

We exist to actively participate in escalating the class war towards communism.

Want to get in involved in Subversion?

There are many ways you could get involved in Subversion. For instance:

☐ Correspond with us on issues raised in our bulletin
☐ Write articles for inclusion in our bulletin (let us know in advance an outline of what you're thinking of writing)
☐ Take extra copies of the Subversion bulletin to distribute to friends or at local meetings/events
☐ Copy and distribute relevant articles more widely
☐ Contribute financially on a regular basis

Ideally we would like to see Subversion grow and become more effective by joining up with other local active groups following a period of joint discussion and activity. But we recognise that at the present time many individual revolutionaries are fairly isolated. If you're in this situation and you already do most or all of the above list it would be a logical step to consider joining our group. If you live in or within easy travelling distance of Greater Manchester we would urge you to do this. If you live further away the practical benefits of joining would be less but we could still guarantee:

☐ Regular minutes of our meetings
☐ Access to material we receive
☐ Regular contact through letters/phone calls/email
☐ Draft articles for Subversion for comment

In this way you would have more influence on the direction and activity of the group.

Obviously if we had a large influx of individual members like this we would then all have to discuss new ways of organising that would more effectively involve everyone.

So - think about it!

Our Address is on page 19

Since issue 18 Subversion has included several articles on the fight against the Job Seekers Allowance, and the possibilities (if any) for joint action with dole office workers, including the article "Only Doing Your Job?" written by two comrades from Nottingham in Subversion 22. What follows is a reply to that article; a response by one of the Nottingham comrades; and a further contribution by two comrades of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF).

Against Pious Moral Liberalism!

A Reply to Two Comrades from Nottingham

During the great miners strike of 1984-85 many so-called anarchists, particularly those inclined towards animal liberation or 'lifestyle politics', refused to throw their weight behind the striking miners. After all, weren't all the miners sexist, didn't they all eat meat? etc. Such arguments resurfaced during the print workers strike at Wapping when, rather than seize an opportunity with the potential to turn the tide of class struggle back in our favour, such 'anarchists' chose to stand aloof from a strike by supposedly selfish and privileged workers who merely wanted to defend their own position doing dirty propaganda work for the bosses by printing a reactionary newspaper that attacked women, gays and lesbians etc. Since then such sanctimonious moralism has gone from strength to strength as we have experienced defeat after defeat in the class war. Of course, pious moral liberalism has always played an important part in British anarchism, but it has become ever more prevalent in recent years, even invading the pages of otherwise avowedly communist organs such as Subversion.

In its most virulent and arrogant form this pious liberal moralism has taken the form of primitivism. Primitivists like to present themselves as the ultimate radicals. Indeed, what can be more radical than to reject civilisation as such!? But for all their pious denunciations of civilisation and vision of new hunter gathering societies they have, short of mass genocide, no means for transforming the world. Their radicalism turns out to be merely a pose.

The true nature of primitivism was perhaps most clearly exposed by a leaflet circulated by the Primitivist Network entitled 'JSA: So What!?'. With the JSA, and the subsequent Workfare schemes such as Project Work and the proposed New Deal, it would seem clear that the state is in effect targeting the very material basis for many within the anarchist milieu. The class struggle is being brought home. But what was the response of Primitivists? To ignore the whole issue! For them we should not be dependent on the state, and anyway the unemployed need a good boot up the arse! If these arguments remind one of a right wing Tory, rest assured that the campaigns they suggest we should engage with instead of opposing the JSA and Project Work - e.g. against genetically modified food, the Asylum Act etc. - return them to the terrain of concerned liberals everywhere (1).

(1) When you're born the first thing you face is aggression - a slap on the bum (2) Then they stick you behind bars ("Stop sucking your thumb!")

In the previous issues of Subversion you have sought to respond to Primitivism, albeit on its own terms, by arguing for a Green Communism. However, in the last issue you carried another piece of pious moral liberalism which for some reason you did not see fit to answer. This piece was the article Only Doing Your Job? which we would like to take issue with here.

We gather that comrades in Nottingham have been actively involved in the fight against the JSA, Project Work etc., and have in the past made efforts to connect with dole workers which have either been ignored or even met with active resistance from local CPSA officials. Overcoming the divisions between different sections of the proletariat is of course a key problem in the class struggle. However we are forced to respond to the way our two Nottingham comrades have posed the issue in their article. Here we see that their apparent commitment to class analysis is completely betrayed by a bourgeois individualistic approach to the problem. It is an approach that inevitably leads them to a pious liberal moralism that is no better than that we find with the Primitivists. This approach is made clear with their opening remarks where they suggest that the question of solidarity with struggling dole workers "appears to refer to the freedom versus determinism debate in philosophy: how much is our behaviour authentically free and how much is it determined by social circumstances" (Only Doing Your Job?, Subversion 22) (2)

Of course, it could be argued that the question of free will versus determinism has always been a philosophical problem. But it is a question that is central to bourgeois philosophy. Under capitalism freedom of choice becomes a necessity. Everyone must be free to buy just as everyone must be free to sell. Indeed with ever increasing production of commodities we have an ever

expanding choice of what to buy (so long as we have the money of course). Not only this, with the rise of democracy, which goes hand in hand with the rise of capitalism, we are even free to choose our own rulers!

DE TIRANNEN VERKNEUKELEN ZICH IN HUN MACHT.
GOD, ZIET JE!
JE HANDEN BOVEN HET DEKEN! VUILIK!!
JE DOEN JE STRONT VRETEN
VRETEN! LEG IK

(3) Tyranny rules ("God's watching you!" "Hands above the blankets! Filthy beast!") (4) They make you eat shit ("Eat it all up!")

Yet at the same time the development of capitalism breaks society up into isolated individuals that have no control over the social world which they serve to create. Capitalists have to ruthlessly pursue greater profits or else they will soon cease to be capitalists, workers have to work harder and harder or else they will find themselves on the dole. At the same time whole industries and communities can be devastated through a mere change in the price of a commodity. In this light the action of human beings are determined by capital as an alien social force.

It is this contradiction that provides the material basis for the dilemma of bourgeois philosophy between free will and determinism. Of course, for our liberal bourgeois philosopher, who is both unwilling and unable to transform society from the comfort of his study, what is important is the individual's freedom of choice. While he may well recognise the shortcomings of capitalism he puts this down to people making the wrong moral choices. For the liberal bourgeois philosophers of the enlightenment it was simply a question of reason. If everyone acted in accordance with reason, if everyone only did to others what they wanted done to them, then everything would be OK. Indeed, since every 'man' was a rational being by definition then there were good hopes that this could be achieved.

Over the 200 years or so since the enlightenment, however, capitalism has in many respects become worse. The idea that if only we each made the right moral choice in our own enlightened self-interest then all would be well has worn a little thin. Many of the more militant modern day liberals have given up on the mass of humanity making the right moral choices. Indeed, in the case of some primitivists they have given up on the notion of reason altogether, seeing it as part of the problem. The only course for such modern day liberals is to keep their own consciences clear by making their own moral choices and denounce every one else for not following suit. All they can do is hope for some apocalypse to come and redeem the world.

The approach which dominates the article by the two Nottingham comrades is essentially no different from that of such modern day militant liberals. Of course they recognise that it is in the ultimate interests of the working class to overthrow capitalism and introduce communism. Yet for them it is simply a question of each individual proletarian choosing to pursue their class interests regardless of what situation they find themselves in. From this they can conclude that the working class is potential good while the capitalists are bad.

The problem then arises as to why the mass of working class individuals have not chosen to overthrow capitalism. It is clear to our friends from Nottingham that some workers have clearly made the wrong choice. Those choosing to be police officers, social workers, school teachers, journalists, dole workers etc. All are clearly working against the interests of the working class. But it is not just these workers. On closer inspection we can find, rather surprisingly, that nearly all workers are in some way working for capital and thus ultimately against the general interests of the working class! They have all made the wrong choice! Postal workers deliver bills and disconnection threats to working class households. Car workers produce cars which will be driven through working class districts killing working class children etc. The logical conclusion would seem to be the only proletarians who can be genuinely and unequivocally opposing capital are those that refuse work altogether!!! (3) We don't know if our two Nottingham comrades feel they are in such an 'uncompromised' position. But the idea that all proletarians should strive for such purity can only lead to such isolation that all that can be realistically hoped for is some kind of revolutionary apocalypse!!!

Generalising from their own negative experience of dole workers, and local CPSA hacks in particular, our Nottingham comrades have been led to disparage all the efforts by dole workers to resist the JSA. Against this one should recognise that, for all the bluster our Nottingham friends have provoked, it is action by dole workers which has had the most effect in disrupting the implementation of the JSA and mitigating its effects. With just the one day strike two years ago the dole workers managed to cause more disruption to the implementation of the JSA than the entire Groundswell movement has been able to do in three years. Of course, our two Nottingham comrades argue that this strike, and those taken by the DSS workers later in the year, were not directly against the JSA but were for taken for their own interests (4). But since when have we expected any workers to strike for purely altruistic reasons!

Our Nottingham friends complain that

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Pious Moral Liberalism

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dole workers don't stick their necks out when claimants are being threatened with dole cuts if they don't look hard enough for work. But it must be remembered that if a dole worker is sacked they too face losing their benefits for six months, and furthermore if they leak information, however trivial, they can be prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act! It is easy being political on the dole. You don't normally get your money cut or get disciplined for handing out leaflets or speaking at meetings; dole workers can.

Their own efforts to make links with local dole workers having failed our friends from Nottingham sought to parade their radicalism by advocating a national three strikes policy. We can appreciate why groups such as Edinburgh have adopted a such a policy, and why our Nottingham comrades found it attractive. Facing a hostile local trade union movement and a right wing branch of the CPSA, Edinburgh claimants were able to mount a relatively effective three strikes policy because they had built up strong links with local claimants through their unemployed centre (5). Of course if there had been a nation-wide mass movement of claimants, or if three strikes had the potential of mobilising such a movement, then a national three strikes policy might have made sense. But the fact is there isn't a mass movement of claimants. We can barely mobilise 100 people for a national demo out of two and half million claimants! Even so-called political claimants have refused to become involved in the fight against the JSA preferring to bury their heads in the sand. In such a situation a national three strikes policy would have been a disaster, alienating us from any number of potential allies. Perhaps fortunately most groups in Groundswell have proved too weak to implement any such policy even if they had wanted to!

For us class analysis is not about making moral judgements on the individual choices of groups of workers regardless of the circumstances. It is a question of assessing the possibility of transforming such circumstances and choices through collective action and solidarity. Of course this does not mean there is no place for an individual proletarian making a principled stand, particularly if this leads to an exemplary act which encourages collective action. But, unlike the liberal philosopher, we can not be content with individual choice, we need collective action to transform the world since the individual choices we all have are limited by the world we live in.

(5) They stuff you into silly clothes

This does not mean we simply proclaim some form of ideal unity as much of the left does. Unity between individual proletarians and different sections of the proletariat has to be built through the recognition of immediate differences of interests and the attempt to reconcile them within the common struggle. Of course there are some workers whose very job requires them to internalise the interests of capital as much as any capitalist. The obvious example is the police. In all but the most exceptional circumstances we can not expect the police to come over to our side, and if they did they would soon have to cease to be police. For other workers, such as dole workers, the situation is far more complex.

Our friends from Nottingham rightly point out that the JSA involves a change in the role of front-line staff 'from one of administration to more of a policing role'. However they wrongly accept this as a fait accompli when it is still being contested. Moreover, such a characterisation of dole workers as police who force the unemployed to find work fails to recognise that, whether we like it or not, the majority of claimants want work if for no other reason than because they need the money. Part of the job for dole workers is to help people find work as well as to administer the payment of benefits (6). Of course many dole workers distinguish between good claimants who are looking for work and bad ones that are not. Some may even hate all claimants. But in our experience many recognise that there are not enough jobs to go around even if every one wanted one, and that most of those that are advertised pay shit wages that no one should be expected to work for.

Yet the balance of these attitudes depends on the balance of class forces within the office. If management is strong then each individual dole worker will only be able to either stick their neck out and get the sack or else keep their head down and adopt a more hostile attitude to claimants. If the workers are collectively strong however then they can resist the demands and targets set by management. This has clearly been proven in Brighton. For example, in Brighton, where the dole workers are organised and strong, there has been far fewer people sanctioned than in surrounding offices where the dole workers are less organised and weaker.

What is more, a part of this strength is a direct result of the solidarity we have built with the dole workers. We have supported their strikes because it has been in our interest, as well as that of the class as a whole, for the strikes to have maximum impact. We have boosted their picket lines and then leafleted other claimants afterwards explaining the reasons for the strike and countering management's attempts to encourage dole workers and claimants to see each other as the problem, thereby deflecting attention from our mutual class enemies. And we inform them of our actions and demonstrations and so forth so that they can come and support us, establishing real solidarity. (7)

In a period where we have seen defeat after defeat in the class war we can

understand the attractions of a pious moral liberalism in all its various guises. Yet such an approach only serves to perpetuate our present predicament and as such must be exposed and denounced (8). With the declining effectiveness of labourism there is now, for the first time in many decades, an opportunity to break down many of the sectional divisions within the working class. But such an opportunity will be lost if we follow the example of our friends from Nottingham!

Yours for proletarian solidarity (not sanctimonious piety),

B & B, c/o PO Box 2536, Rottingdean, East Sussex BN2 6LX

(1) The irony is that the whole basis of the Asylum Act's attack on refugees is the withdrawal of benefits - a basis from which we could make links of proletarian solidarity from our own situation by grasping the class significance of benefits rather than dismissing their defence as worthless reformism. Of course this criticism of reformism has a kernel of truth - the argument that the welfare state does not embody the final victory of the working class was essential whilst it served its primary purpose of containing working class revolt. But with the boot now on the other foot, i.e. with capital on the offensive, to refuse to engage with the struggles over benefits because they fall short of some ideal is like arguing we shouldn't stop capital from taking the bread from our mouths because what we really want is the whole bakery. The welfare state has become a hindrance to capital in the class war, which is why capital wants to restructure it. Even though it is a defective weapon in our hands we cannot allow ourselves to be disarmed when the only other thing apparent in our in our armoury at present is a white flag.

(2) Subversion readers who missed this article may cringe to read this quote, or may even think we have been unfair to our Nottingham comrades by picking out this piece of self-evidently bourgeois logic from an article expressing an otherwise sound grasp of dialectical thinking. On the contrary we could have chosen to highlight the devastatingly penetrative reasoning displayed by conclusions such as "Two wrongs don't make a right" or "If something is bad then it does not matter how much you get paid...It's still bad..." (Only Doing Your Job?, Subversion 22) but that would have been, ...erm, ...unjust? Unreasonable? Not quite cricket?

(3) But of course it could be argued that the unemployed function as an industrial reserve army for capital, the growth of which has coincided with a period of heavy defeats for the working class.

(4) As if the same argument could not be levelled at their 'Three Strikes' tactic!

(5) The Three Strikes policy was originally put forward by Edinburgh claimants in response to the 'fraud buster' campaign. It was a tactic designed to discourage certain individuals within the Employment Service from the over-zealous implementation of the existing benefit rules. Notwithstanding the particular circumstances Edinburgh claimants found themselves faced with, it was always a grossly inadequate response to the wholesale change in the benefit rules introduced through the JSA. But at least in Edinburgh there was a significant enough claimants organisation for such a tactic to amount to more than empty radical posturing.

(6) The particular experience of the claimant actively avoiding work should not be taken as the sole basis for assessing the class significance of the JSA. Any claimants groups who have successfully managed to completely close down a dole office for any significant period of time will have encountered the problem of unappreciative claimants wanting to gain access to the office to sign on, to sort out about missing girocheques, or to get a job. Unfortunately the lack of this sort of action in many parts of the country has allowed illusions about claimants to be retained and with them misconceptions about the functions of dole workers. Perhaps if those groups incapable of shutting down their local Job Centre(s) had spent a few hours outside them when striking dole workers did just that they might have realised that building opposition to the JSA would necessarily require broadening the issue beyond that of 'they want me to work and I don't want to'.

(7) Of course we recognise that such a relationship may not always be as easy to establish and maintain as we have found. There is always the potential problem when being involved in an umbrella 'Brighton Against The JSA'- or 'London Against The JSA'- type group of having to deal with leftist ideologues. Indeed, Subversion 22 also contained an 'Open Letter of Resignation from the Secretary of Wales Against the JSA' which vividly describes a situation in which the letter writer was forced to resign from the group because it was dominated by leftists seeking to subordinate direct action by claimants to the strategy of the CPSA. Lest anyone be under the impression that such a withdrawal has released an explosion of previously suppressed autonomous struggle by Welsh claimants the letter also makes it pretty clear that such a problem only became insurmountable in the first place because of the lack of any significant movement amongst claimants. It's hardly surprising that leftist activists will retain workerist illusions in the absence of any visible alternative force of organised opposition to JSA (nor that such workerism will be focused on dole workers when they are the only workers actively contesting JSA). Subsequent to leaving WAJSA the writer of this letter, and the seven or eight who quit with him, have been too unenthusiastic to establish any claimant - oriented alternative.

(8) Given Subversion's professed opposition, worthy even of a place in their hallowed 'Aims and Principles', to all ideologies which seek to divide the working class, one might reasonably have expected a scathing critique of the article by the two comrades from Nottingham. No doubt had a letter been submitted by a striking dole worker arguing that the pursuit of solidarity with the unemployed was pointless Subversion would have seen fit to condemn such divisiveness. Or are Subversion intending to redefine their aims and principles to accept divisive ideologies when they are espoused by those who feel they are oppressed by another section of the proletariat? Can we expect Subversion to provide sympathetic space for black nationalism, Irish republicanism or separatist feminism now that this precedent has been set?

The following are two independent replies to the foregoing Reply to Two Comrades from Nottingham. Both are written in a personal capacity and do not necessarily reflect the views of other members of Nottingham Campaign Against the Job Seekers Allowance (recently renamed Nottingham Claimants Action). The first, "Doling It Out", is by one of the Two Comrades, the second, "State Power and Class Solidarity", is by two members of the Anarchist Communist Federation in Nottingham.

Doling it Out

'A Reply to Two Comrades From Nottingham' purports to be a riposte to an article on dole workers, 'I'm Only Doing My Job!', published in Subversion 22. This piece is so hysterical and generally incoherent that to attempt any systematic response would be almost impossible. What I can do, however, is to explain the situation here in Nottingham and along the way refute the few logical points which the 'Reply' does make. The author(s) identify themselves only as B & B so I will refer to them as Bugs and Bunny, a designation which accurately reflects the level of their contribution.

At its inception Nottingham Campaign Against the Job Seekers Allowance (NCAJSA) contained

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(6) And pack you off to school ("We're rid of him!" "One day he'll thank us!")

Doling it Out

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two distinct tendencies:

(1) A Trades Council and Trade Union tendency with close links to the CPSA. They wanted a CPSA solidarity group with the interests of the claimants being subordinated to those of the CPSA dole workers.

Bugs and Bunny say:

"Our Nottingham friends complain that dole workers don't stick their necks out when claimants are being threatened with dole cuts if they don't look hard enough for work. But it must be remembered that if a dole worker is sacked they too face losing their benefits for six months, and furthermore if they leak information, however trivial, they can be prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act. It is easy being political on the dole. You don't normally get your money cut or get disciplined for handing out leaflets or speaking at meetings; dole workers can."

Actually we have members and reports of claimants being persecuted by dole workers not even for overt political activity, but simply for asking for their rights! The message that comes from Bugs and Bunny is that dole workers are real people whose interests come well before those of the claimants.

Why should claimants worry about it at all if their struggle makes life difficult for dole workers? The fact is that their interests are diametrically opposed. Bugs and Bunny are calling for a dole workers support group rather than a claimants action group. The message coming from the Nottingham CPSA and Trades Council to claimants was, and is, "Don't do anything yourselves, rely on us, we will do it for you". Bugs and Bunny perfectly echo this classic bureaucratic viewpoint.

Think about this further: almost any struggle by any group of workers under capitalism will have negative consequences for other groups of workers. Ban nuclear power: what about the nuclear engineers. Stop producing weapons of mass destruction: what about the interests of the technocrats and scientists. Occupy a dole office: what about the claimants who want their money and the workers who want a quiet life.

The TU/TC tendency are actively opposed to any activity, such as occupying a dole office for example, which would only 'alienate' dole workers. They were actively opposed to any criticism of the Labour Party before and during the General Election period, and indeed anything which might 'rock the boat' for Labour. In fact, they were opposed to any activity which might embarrass the 'broad labour movement' period. In practice, this meant that they were opposed to any activity whatsoever.

(7) Where you're finally broken in

(In Wales, as Stuart Bracewell points out in his 'Dole Bondage: Up Yours!', the bureaucrats and their leftist supporters at least had the political nuance to pretend to want to do some activity as they held a diversionary demonstration.)

In crude material terms of finance and status it is accurate to say that the TU/TC tendency in Nottingham are a relatively privileged layer of the working class and represent the interests of the labour aristocracy.

(2) An Anarchist influenced tendency, along with one Communist (Talbot) and politically non-aligned people, who, for different reasons, do not see the Labour Party or Trade Unions as a means of self-defence for the working class and still less as possible agencies of social change. This tendency consisted of claimants and recent claimants who were, and are, orientated to building links with claimants and direct activity against the JSA. Another factor which formed an undercurrent of antagonism between the tendencies was, and is, the substantial influence of Trotskyism on the Trades Council and CPSA in Nottingham. Habitually concerned, as they are, with Labour Party work, mainly internal 'entrism', it is fair to say, and Talbot is someone who spent ten years in the Trotskyist movement on his way to Communism, that they would regard something like NCAJSA as 'unofficial' and 'ultra-left'. These leftists hate any working class self-activity.

In essence, then, we had in Nottingham an anti-JSA group with a similar social composition as Wales Against the JSA which, probably due to a larger numerical base, the TU and leftist contingent were able to destroy. I will not bore readers with the initial compromises which the 'Anarcho/Commie/non-aligned' tendency made to initiate unity with the TC and CPSA, three leaflets, endless letters, keeping our mouth shut etc., except to point out that the arrest of two comrades after a dole office invasion was something of a watershed. The police were certainly aware that if NCAJSA activists were picked up then the Trades Council would not be protesting and that the CPSA would be having a quiet private laugh.

The end of the Trades Council presence at NCAJSA, which appeared to be a 'keep an eye on the ultras' mission, was the best thing that ever happened to it and enabled the group to genuinely represent the interests of claimants. It is totally wrong to allege, as Bugs and Bunny do, that:

"One should recognise that, for all the bluster our Nottingham friends have provoked, it is action by dole workers which has had the most effect in disrupting the implementation of the JSA and mitigating its effects. With just the one day strike two years ago the dole workers managed to cause more disruption to the implementation of the JSA than the entire Groundswell movement has been able to do in three years."

Leaving aside the timescale, the JSA was introduced on the 7th October 1996, and the fact that the CPSA strike was for screens to protect dole workers against claimants, and nothing to do with opposing the JSA the slur against Groundswell is a simple lie, and a pretty stupid one at that as it is so easy to refute. The CPSA strike had zero effect on the implementation of the JSA and the local CPSA representative in Nottingham had to descend to arguments about the computer system malfunctioning as being the main hope for claimants!

It is clear, if one reads the rules and regulations governing the implementation of the JSA, that it is being imposed in a minimalist manner as management fear a 'blow up'. We know from our activity that the dole management is paranoid about anti-JSA activity and that dole workers are fearful of a three strikes policy. Groundswell has not stopped the JSA, given the balance of class forces at this conjuncture it could never have done so, but it has helped ensure a vast modification in its potential implementation and can take credit for this. To say that direct action against the JSA has been worthless is a slur on the comrades who have struggled against the JSA.

Bugs and Bunny assert that, "part of the job for dole workers is to help people find work as well as to administer the payment of benefits." Before you wet yourself laughing: just two points. Any claimant will tell you that the role of the dole office personnel, far from helping people to find work, is to force claimants into McWork or on to the various ES schemes to keep down the dole figures on paper. This relates to the second point: the role of dole workers now is not simply to 'administer the payment of benefits' but to act in a policing role over claimants. This policing role hangs like a shadow over claimants if there is any attempt to tighten up on the implementation of the JSA. It is this important change in the increase of power of dole workers over claimants which the CPSA and their allies are attempting to gloss over. The best possible deal for claimants has always been when the dole workers are on strike and you get paid automatically without the aggravation of seeing them!

Earlier, Bugs and Bunny make an implicit attempt to minimise the anti-working class activity of dole workers by pointing out that everyone in a capitalist society is in some way implicated in its maintenance and reproduction: "On closer inspection we can find, rather surprisingly, that nearly all workers are in some way working for capital and thus ultimately against the general interests of the working class!" Yes folks, dole workers cannot be criticised because, after all, we're all at it! This is a revelation which I can only thank Bugs and Bunny for bringing to our attention.

If the working class was an homogenous mass then Bugs and Bunny would be accurate, but even a passing glance indicates the utter futility of their 'analysis'. If an analysis cannot distinguish between police, social workers, bailiffs, debt collectors, shop assistants and factory production workers, then, it is a fairly useless analysis. The essential point is that there are degrees of complicity in one's support for capitalism. Even producing a magazine like Subversion, which much as I disagree with some of its politics, is obviously directed to the destruction of this corrupt capitalist system, is going to involve the comrades in 'complicity' as they buy paper, ink and printing technology.

The manner in which we locate workers in terms of class positional location depends on 'objective' factors covering a combination of their relationship to capital, their relationship to the state and their relationship to the working class plus 'subjective' factors such as political class consciousness. It is true that the analysis of this multitude of factors can be complex but even a passing glance indicates some of the possibilities of it.

For example, I think that we can say that, contrary to leftists like the Socialist Workers Party with their 'workers in uniform' thesis which notices that the ranks of the forces are drawn from the working class, that the police and armed forces are direct representatives of the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state.

An obvious difference in the composition of the working class under advanced capitalism, (some would assert an advanced state of decay), is the vast numerical diminishment in those occupying the category of proletarian, i.e., directly producing surplus value in line with the massive decline in manufacturing industry. In contrast, a group which has vastly increased in size is the professional and managerial strata. This grouping are 'between capital and labour' in that, whilst being totally reliant on capitalism for their financial support, they occupy a supervisory role over other working class people - teachers, social workers etc. Many of them have a consciousness of status in which they place themselves above other sectors of the working class.

(8-9) They turn you into consumer durables ("At last they look human!")

I would place dole workers in the lower

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Doling it Out

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echelons of this (PMS) category. They are, if somewhat more indirectly now, state employees who occupy a position of control over a section of the working class. Apologists for dole workers have argued that they are low paid and have low status, but this is irrelevant in defining their policing role. Indeed, many dole workers, precisely because they are aware that they are regarded as expendable by the Benefits Agency, exhibit a very hostile attitude towards their 'clients'. The introduction of 'targeting' for dole workers where they gain favour by removing claimants from the dole, stopping their payments etc. legitimises this.

Of course, as Bugs and Bunny point out, whilst class positional location might allow one to make broad generalisations it does not automatically determine individual consciousness and activity. We noted that workers on a temporary contract at the dole had two main attitudes, do the work on a minimalist basis and get out, or attempt to gain favour from management with one result of this being to give claimants a hard time. In this situation the local anti-JSA group was perfectly correct to attempt to win over individual dole workers who understood the contradictions which their job placed them in with regard to claimants. It is absolutely no criticism of NCAJSA that intensive work failed to locate such people.

The attitude of the local CPSA/TC leadership has been to deny that any contradictions exist and to blame NCAJSA for 'splitting the working class' when it is patently obvious that the class is well split long before we came along. Actually, one important political task is for us, in my opinion, is to politically explain intra-class splits. In the case of the opposition to the JSA, for instance, it quickly became obvious that those forces orientated towards politically supporting the Labour party and trade union perspectives are little more than the left-wing of bourgeois ideology. The article by Bugs and Bunny fits perfectly into this repellent milieu.

Bugs and Bunny are so confident of their arguments that they whine that Subversion should not have published 'I'm Only Doing My Job' at all. Naturally, Subversion can speak for itself on its editorial policy, but have the author(s) of the 'Reply' not heard of the global injunction that signed articles do not necessarily reflect the editorial viewpoint, and may even be in opposition to it order to initiate debate? Of course they must, but so immersed in their decrepit sectarian ghetto are they that open debate is anathema to them. Their whole article reeks of sectarian posturing and sneering.

One thing that the experience of organising against the JSA in Nottingham has indicated is that people of widely diverse political views, and people entirely new to active politics, can work together in a constructive manner and build up a relationship of trust. In an overall political environment where there are painfully few radicals, of any political description, this denotes a tremendously useful experience. Certainly more fruitful than sectarian sniping from the Brighton bunker.

Ted Talbot

(NCAJSA recently changed its name to Nottingham Claimants Action, NCA).

(10) And force you to compete with each other ("At your service, Sir" "Well done teacher")

State Power and Class Solidarity

It is unfortunate that B&B started their Reply with the assumption that the Subversion 22 article "Only Doing Your Job?" was written by anarchists. Actually it wasn't, and as anarchists in the same anti-JSA group as the Two Comrades we will use the opportunity (given to us by Subversion) of seeing the Reply in advance, so as to include a response in the same issue and present another perspective on the dole work issue. We can't start our response without saying that we thought the tone of the Reply was extremely patronising, and also that it is mainly because of their initial ill-informed assumptions that B&B then needed to use such long tortuous logic to present what is really quite a straightforward position. The Two Comrades are left to further explain their own positions if they want to.

Let's look at the attack on anarchism first. B&B bring up the problem of moralism in lifestyle anarchism. There we agree - not supporting miners because they eat meat is lifestylist and moralistic. We would equally criticise primitivists not taking a class struggle perspective. But then we have to suffer accusations of anarchists being bourgeois, liberal and purist, never mind the unfathomable "free-will versus determinism" stuff. Surely you know that all anarchists are not the same? For the record, from our point of view, working class people cannot escape the all-pervading capitalist relation in their everyday lives, whether as wage slaves or dole slaves, or as destitute. However, there are still choices, and these choices don't have to be on moral grounds, but instead on the basis of what is class solidarity and what isn't. It is the rooting of our ideas in class struggle which is important, which has nothing to do with idealism or moralism.

B&B agree with the Two Comrades that the role of the front-line worker has been changed by JSA "from one of administration to more of a policing role", and so do we. But B&B say it hasn't really been accomplished yet so

it's still an arena of struggle, and we should give dole workers the benefit of the doubt, at least the ones who say they are opposing JSA. Well, at a Groundswell conference last year a high-profile dole worker attended, who supports Groundswell and wants other workers to take action against the JSA. We found he believes front line workers shouldn't be criticised for making decisions to send claimants to adjudication. This is even if they know full well that claimants are likely to get cut off the dole to fulfil pre-specified quotas which have been set nationally or locally. Where is the class solidarity there? In case you think that particular dole worker is a bad example, have you really heard anything better from any other? As for action taken by dole workers against performance-related-pay, isn't that more to do with trades union resistance to anything that threatens national pay-bargaining rather than a conscious desire to prevent the unemployed getting shafted by quotas? Furthermore, it doesn't matter if the quotas for getting claimants off the dole are being met only slowly or partially. Even inefficient implementation is no excuse, whether it's due to management incompetence or due to workers taking industrial action, so long as any number of claimants are getting forced off the dole. So we are not comforted by dole workers saying, "don't worry, it's all chaos" in response to introduction of new benefits legislation. As with the introduction of most new computer systems, it took a while for the JSA software bugs to be ironed out and for workers to be trained to use it, but now it seems to be working fine.

(11) Rebellion is badly organised

To make the central point of our reply, the function of a worker's job in relation to the state is as important as its relation to capital. So the singling out of police as beyond the pale on the basis of their "internalising capitalism" is not very helpful. This also goes for the prison officer, and other groups anarchists have traditionally had a problem with, such as the school teacher, the social worker, the psychiatrist and yes, the dole office worker, well before the current rounds of legislation. The anarchist understanding of the importance of power and state power in particular helps us towards an analysis of the role these workers play, no matter that all these groups are wage slaves and many on fairly low pay. The prison officer locks you in your cell, a school teacher disciplines you, the social worker can take your kids away, the psychiatrist can get you sectioned, and the dole worker can take your money away - these are all state related functions, mostly affecting working class people. Of course, just as it is not always easy to define a person's class position in terms of how much they own or earn, it is not always easy to define it by their relationship to the state. It's often a question of degree. Most of us are clear on the police, but we'd say that's not because they are so different, rather because it's so much more obvious that the police aren't there to help us. You say the dole worker is there to help in some capacity. So what? Cops help sometimes - arranging for low paid pensioners' windows to be secured after a burglary for example. If they stuck to that more often would they be a bit better? What about Special Officers, are they a bit nicer? Of course not. Their job function in relation to the state is what matters, not the action of individuals. All we are asking is you consider the role of the dole worker by the same criteria.

It's worth saying here that the pros and cons of "3 Strikes and You're Out" are actually a diversion to our central argument. Three Strikes as it was intended does have some problems, even though it may be useful tactically. It does attempt to individualise each worker's position, singling out the over-zealous types for attention, whereas our argument actually goes further, saying it's not just few rotten apples in the barrel. Secondly, claimants haven't exactly been flocking to us with requests to do it (or to do any other anti-JSA actions for that matter), so it could be seen as vanguardist. Thirdly, 3 Strikes could perhaps be thought of as a means by which class anger is mediated or negotiated by reformists, seeing as dole workers get verbally and physically attacked by claimants on a daily basis anyway!

The link with 3 Strikes and our argument is really only in the response it has had from CPSA and trades unions in general which is basically along the lines of "how dare you attack workers who are just doing their job, just another shitty low paid job under capitalism". It seems to us that the criteria B&B are using is mostly based on economics, and that is why you are soft on this kind of response. It's also what causes you to make the mistake of your "car workers produce cars that kill working class children" analogy. There is no state or power relation here, so it's completely different. Similarly, the postal worker cannot prevent you from being cut off by not delivering the final demand! It's the worker that cuts off another working class person's water that we have a problem with. Notice that this distinction is made not on moral grounds but instead on the power relationship implied. And it is not just the type of job we criticise on the basis of power. Tactics in struggle are also an issue, so ambulance crews not answering emergency calls during a strike which puts working class people's lives at risk are similarly problematic (this was first raised in an old ACF Organise! article, issue 18, which covered the 1989-90 strike).

The Reply's swipe at Subversion's Aims and Principles was on the basis that the view of the Two Comrades acted to divide the working class, so B&B ask why Subversion didn't respond to this. Probably our own view is also seen in the same light. But we are talking about a division which we perceive as already existing in the working class. We would like the dole worker to see the problems in their class position -

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State Power & Class Solidarity

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that of doing a job which especially now by its very nature attacks other working class people. But, in reality, the situation will not be resolved by the claimant and the dole worker coming to a compromise, nor does any really useful solidarity seem likely, and at some point we think revolutionaries will have to accept that. Some on the left who put the police inside the working class would support their 'right' to be unionised, just as they have supported prison officers who until the passing of the Criminal Justice Bill were allowed to be unionised. Even if this is beyond the pale, why not use your argument to make the case for bringing prison officers and prisoners together in struggle? If you don't, that's surely because you have already accepted there can be no compromise short of prisoners being handed the keys. Is the position of the dole worker under JSA really so different?

Useful Work and Useless Toil

Following on the debate in the last two issues of Subversion on *The Targetting of Key Economic Sectors By Troublemaking Types*, we are publishing, below, a letter from a comrade in Liverpool, and, on the opposite page, our reply.

You seem to have run into some internal criticism over your articles (Subversion 21/22) about revolutionaries entering specific kinds of employment. I'd like to suggest actually NOT working offers more of a revolutionary potential than your writer gives credit for. To consider ourselves revolutionary we need to participate in actions that oppose capitalism: it could hardly be said that working for the sake of it is revolutionary. At best work enables us to put something decent on the table to eat and/or helps pay the rent, but the basic ingredient of the act of work surely only underpins the lousy system that enslaves us?

If we are not in a job that pays enough to allow us to financially support the overthrow of capitalism then the job is probably not worth a fuck anyway - give it up, sacrifice the pittance it pays and get down to some REAL work i.e. subverting the system. A regular diet of beans on toast isn't too bad and after a while, when one gets quite used to it, there comes the quiet but wholesome satisfaction knowing that you're no longer following trends of this or that new product that is such an indispensable ploy of capitalist marketing.

Jobs/wages invariably lead us to shackling ourselves to the baubles that capitalism dangles before us incessantly - drop out and do something that hurts capitalism instead of meandering along inside its poxy system. Experience the sheer joy of waking up to a new day, every day, knowing that day to be entirely your own to do with as you like, without having to sell it to anybody. Bliss! Jobs - factories/offices/shops, where jobs are mainly to be found, are simply prisons in which they keep us interred during the prime cycle of the day, releasing us overnight in order to recuperate before returning the following morning for yet another 8/10/12 hours more miserable confinement without seeing the natural light of day, sunshine, blue sky, flowers, pissing-down rain or whatever. It's your life, why spend the best part of it in some factory unit making contributions to the capitalist cause.

(12) Some practice passive resistance ("What!! Failed again!!!" "Parent=cop") (13) Or escape

When I signed on recently (Southport) they tried to push me into a job, wait for it, as, for fuck's sake, a JOB-CLUB LEADER, and hear this too, it was a four-day week, maximum 32 hours, paying £5.70 an hour (rates unheard of advertised on Southport's job display board) plus a yearly quota achievement bonus. Now, I'm on my uppers and have been for a while but no way was I going to take a position that requires me to push some other poor sods into crap employment so that I might prosper a little. No way! At the risk of being sanctioned, perhaps losing entitlement altogether, I managed to talk my way out of it, keeping both my integrity and personal esteem intact. No self-respecting revolutionary could or should entertain a shitty number like that surely?

And all that moralistic lark they come out with about not working equals not contributing to society is just a load of old bollocks too - they only want us working so that they can take more and more taxes from us to finance road schemes, provide revenue via various consumer taxations fostering all manner of environmental degradations that serve only to devalue the quality of life in favour of big business, not forgetting too that wage deductions also are filched to pay for the elite lifestyles our rulers lord it over us with. NOT working could become as positive as not voting; if none, or enough of us don't do it, then surely we will have them worried?

In conclusion, allow me to refer back to my own situation briefly: I've been signing on (dole? benefit? why use terms that suggest they are giving us something we should be grateful for?) for almost two years now and I know that a compulsory work-scheme

is imminent. Contemptible of such a scheme though I will be, I will be taking just one line of thought into any forced labour projects with me: Sabotage - photocopiers, computers, vehicles, machinery etc., all cost employers thousands of pounds to buy, to maintain, to repair. Let us make certain that anyone who participates in these wank work-schemes as an employer or training provider pays very dearly for collaboration with the government...Welfare to work? Bollocks! Farewell to work!
F (Liverpool)

Subversion Reply

Just as it is a mistake to believe that wearing black is a revolutionary act, so it is a mistake to believe that not having a job or having a job is a revolutionary act. Oh, if only life were so simple that I could believe I was in any way bucking the system by not having a job as you seem to believe...

Unfortunately, unemployment is a key factor in the operation of the economy. The fact that so many people in Britain are unemployed has enabled business to keep wages down and to instil a discipline and fear in the workforce that was not there in the 1970's. The "recovery" that we have been witness to in the British economy over the last 10 or so years has been due to the way our rulers have tackled the labour problem. It has become a great situation for our economic and political bosses, not only have large numbers of unemployed helped keep the economy on track, but they are also able to make the unemployed feel guilty for not having a job, and, as you point out, make the employed look upon the unemployed as a bunch of idle scroungers who are just bringing our glorious country down. Being unemployed is not a threat to the system. Now, the bosses would certainly like militant troublemaking workers to become unemployed, so that they are no threat to the motor of capitalism (i.e. profit-making, production, and all the jobs that help the economy to run smoothly).

So please explain just how being unemployed "hurts capitalism", and what is it that you do all day that a worker can't do for the promotion of radical thought amongst the working class? (My experience of unemployed radicals, apart from a few notable exceptions, is that they generally somehow seem to have less time or inclination to do and produce things than those who work!).

You seem not to have read the original article properly. Where does it promote "working for the sake of it"? Are you saying that it is worth doing a job only if it "allows us to financially support the overthrow of capitalism"? Does it matter what sort of job this might be? Should we all train to be managers or professionals so that we can get good wages, or become rich tycoons?? If, on the other hand, we go

(14) But the tyrants always have the upper hand ("Are you still a virgin?!" "What will the neighbours think!")

unemployed you say we will be able to get down to "some real work i.e. subverting the system" (see above; please explain). And where does this leave all the militant workers we continually hear about across the world? Aren't they good enough for you? Where does stopping work en masse, and thereby halting the wheels of capitalism, come on your list of most revolutionary things to do? Pretty low down I suppose.

We all, of course, agree that work is a horrible thing, and the whole point of class struggle is to do away with work (i.e. our slavery), which is why the article in question was trying to put forward ideas on how we might best achieve a greater level of class struggle. It was an appeal to everyone to think about how to put themselves in the most interesting position regarding class struggle.

As for your lucrative job offer. Are you sure you actually even read the title of the original article? The article was talking about getting jobs in workplaces where there is an ongoing history of trouble, not taking supervisory posts in back-to-work schemes!!

I'm glad that, should you be forced into a work-scheme in the near future, you will be acting like a lot of workers (who sabotage, steal things and time, etc.). I'm sure, also, that you are aware of the gulf between brave words of intention to sabotage and the actual practice on the job. Also, I'm worried that you only seem to reserve your hatred for the bosses who "collaborate (...) with the government", should we only work for employers who support the Tories?

On not voting in democratic elections. Unfortunately, although it is certainly worthwhile pointing out to our class that voting changes nothing, it is extremely doubtful that the low turn-out at elections worries our rulers. In the USA barely 50% of the electors bother voting, this makes no impact on the democratic process. Don't think that our rulers are stupid, they also know that voting changes nothing, politics is a circus for our entertainment, the real decision-making goes on out of sight of us sad proletarians. If there was any concern that people weren't taking an interest in the democratic process then they could always introduce a law like they have in Australia, where you are legally obliged to vote. But it still wouldn't mean anything; 2% or 100%: it still wouldn't change anything. So, no, a few more of us going on the dole isn't going to worry "them" any more than a few extra thousand not voting at election times.

It is a nice idea that maybe everyone

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Useful Work and Useless Toil

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individually will just give up work to go and lie in a field, but it's a bit unlikely isn't it? Capitalism only finds itself under threat when its workers stop working and profit-making is prevented, this will only happen when the actual employees halt the production/profit process. This is happening every day around the world, if we really want communism then we have to understand that it is from these real actions (not day-dreams) that the revolution will be born.

(15) Because the majority capitulate and collaborate ("OK, you're hired")

Who Can Afford To Pay The Cost of a Communist Utopia?

We are publishing here a letter held over for lack of space from the last issue of Subversion. It refers to three pieces in Subversion 21: "Green Communism", "For those of you thinking about getting a job...", and a letter about "the JSA and all that". Starting opposite, we respond to some of the points it makes.

The Green Communism article rightly stresses that science and technology are not some sort of independent force unrelated to the interests of classes and individuals in present society. This is the mistake technophobes such as Green Anarchist (who regard science and technology much as the medieval church regarded witchcraft) and some 'revolutionary' groups (who imagine that a communist society could extend all the trappings of consumerism to the entire world) are all prone to fall into.

If the writer is correct that "it is just not conceivable that a communist society could base its transport on the mass use of individual motor cars" then this has important implications for the strategy and even the feasibility of a revolutionary movement in the 'developed' world.

In the UK there are some 20 million private cars, or roughly 2 to every 5 people. To reach this level of car ownership for the entire world would mean roughly quadrupling the present car 'population' (and roads and all the associated infrastructure). This is just not on under any economic system. Even if the resources were available the eco-system could never handle the resulting pollution.

This means that in the 'developed' world revolutionaries have a problem that few seem willing to face up to. The price of a communist utopia is, among other things, giving up the private car. Frankly, I can't see many car addicts being willing to pay this price. Since they and their dependents form a majority in the rich nations, this alone seems a massive obstacle to revolutionary movements in these countries. If we're going to be honest with the punters let's throw in the fact that they'll be lucky to have meat more than once a week and a foreign holiday once a decade or a life-time.

We are getting into the murky area of who is middle class and who is working class. What causes endless confusion here is the insistence that someone's class label be defined by their relationship to the means of production, i.e. what sort of job they do, if any. Most 'revolutionaries' think that anyone who is not in some kind of authority over others is part of the working class and hence potential revolutionary material. This leads some to feel that a landless third world peasant has the same class interests as a highly paid technician or salesman in the rich world. People work to live, not live to work. What matters to people themselves is their relationship to the means of consumption i.e. how much money they can get hold of. Anyone with a material standard of living which could not be extended to the whole of humanity under any circumstances is best defined as middle class, if they are not actually capitalists or powerful politicians.

This focus on consumption makes much more sense of the world as it actually is than the writer in no.21 who imagines that there are "key" sections of the "working class" able to "hold the country to ransom" and that revolutionaries can pick and choose their jobs so that they might concentrate in these sectors. Speaking as one of P's "unemployed proletarians", I would be only too happy to take a "cushy, well-paid, middle class job" if such were available to me, rather than "idling comfortably" on JSA at £47.90.

In fact the idea of the working class in countries like the UK is a delusion. Most people in the 'developed' world are middle class. Materially privileged compared to the impoverished majority of humanity, they have a vested interest in preserving the system that delivers these privileges (while they last anyway).

But there is a large, expanding 'underclass' (long-term unemployed, low-paid, most pensioners, single parents etc.) who have no material stake in the system. Our interest is in extracting as much as possible from the rest of society. Yes, they do owe us a living, because they debar us, by various means, from making our own.

Unlike the 'powerful sectors' (who seem to have had a run of hard luck recently) we have little or no labour to withdraw so we must find other methods of struggle which cannot be discussed here for obvious reasons.

Many will feel that this analysis is pessimistic, 'counter-revolutionary', 'capitalist propaganda' etc. It may be all those things but if we look at the real world, from the attitudes and actions of the people we know to the world-wide political scene and recent history, it explains the fact that no revolutionary movement has achieved anything like a mass following in recent years in the rich nations, and will at least help to avoid idiocies like believing that a JSA claimant can have a common class interest with their middle class interrogator on £11-14,000 a year (plus bonuses for stopping giros).

In conclusion I think that any effective revolutionary movement in the 'developed' world must forget this fantasy of the 'working class' and concentrate on working with the 'underclass', whose grievances can only be addressed at the expense of the middle class, pro-capitalist majority. This is why struggles like anti-JSA are important.

JW (London)

Reply:

Revolutionary Potential of the Working Class in the "Developed" World

JW's basic thesis seems to be that in global terms, the bulk of the working class in the 'developed world' are wedded to the capitalist system by reason of their relatively high level of consumption of commodities compared with the impoverished majority of humanity, as a result of which they will never make a revolution.

In response we would make the following points.

1. Whilst the disparities in the geographical distribution of access to the basic requirements of a healthy and fulfilling life is undoubtedly a major problem which any new society would have to tackle as a priority, in a conscious and planned way, such disparities on their own cannot explain the way in which struggle against the present system develops and the possibilities for its overthrow.

2. JW doesn't write off everyone in the developed world. Some, the long term unemployed, many pensioners, single parents and the low paid (how low?) apparently have NO stake in the system even though their material conditions of life are probably still much better than millions of others, waged and unwaged, elsewhere in the world. JW has a problem seeing better-off workers in this country as even potential allies, but many an impoverished 'landless peasant' elsewhere in the world might find it difficult to see JW as a potential ally on this basis!

3. JW doesn't define the boundaries of the 'developed' world. It would presumably include Europe (East as well as West?), North America, Japan, Australasia. Then what about the South-East Asian rim, parts of South America, South Africa and the Middle East etc? It begins to appear that, to the extent that there is a division between developed and underdeveloped, this is certainly not on the basis of national boundaries, of "rich versus poor nations". The workers JW is writing off may not be the majority but they are a significant, widely spread, and potentially powerful minority. If they really are all going to be against revolutionary change for all time , then frankly revolution WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE!

4.

It is almost certainly the case that most 'privileged' and better-off sections of the working class are not going to be at the FOREFRONT of any militant collective action or revolutionary change. Equally there is strong evidence that the really impoverished (starving tribespeople in Zaire for instance?) are also unlikely to be at the forefront of any radical or revolutionary change, if only because their desperation prevents ANY possibility of organisation or awareness beyond the next meal.

5. In so far as levels of income and consumption are any guide to the likelihood of people engaging in struggle today, it is the relative levels locally which are likely to be most significant, for instance between the unwaged and low waged, high waged, and the rich. In practice however it would be difficult to find any direct correlation between levels of struggle and position in the hierarchy of income and consumption.

6. No worker, whether high or low paid, has material security in this system. Workers at all levels have come under attack and have fought back against redundancies, wage cuts, speed-ups, extension of hours, cuts in working conditions etc, and have often found common cause with each other in the process, a common cause which increasingly spans national frontiers.

7. Capitalism certainly tries to reduce life to the consumption of commodities,

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(16) And end up supporting them ("Just like his old man!" "Now it's my turn...")

Revolutionary Potential of the Working Class in the "Developed" World

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to reduce us to individual consumers rather than whole human beings. Outside of consumption, to the extent that capitalism acknowledges civil society at all, we are treated as individual citizens and voters, or 'partners' in the economy.

It may sometimes seem that we have all fallen for this and that our highest aspiration is a bigger and better house and a bigger and better car. Aside from the fact that capitalism, as we said earlier, cannot actually guarantee this continual access to ever increasing personal consumption, it seems to us that many people are deeply unhappy with the whole thing under the surface and cannot in fact be satisfied with a life of endless consumption. There is in the end a big difference between "quality of life" and "standard of living" in the capitalist sense.

This dissatisfaction often expresses itself in negative ways: the huge interest in re-invented and re-packaged religions for instance, everything from Islam and Buddhism to born again Christianity and the mysticism of sections of the Green movement; the desire for community and connection to 'real life' through the short cut of drugs - LSD in the 60s and 70s or ecstasy to-day; the continuing contradictory appeal of nationalism or racism in a search for some kind of communal identity not subject to the changing needs of the market.

All of these expressions are in the end fruitless in so far as they only reinforce the real material sources of alienation in the world, but they still bear witness to the refusal of human beings to be reduced to mere consumers.

8. The 'normal' everyday life of capitalism sees workers divided and isolated not only by their varying degrees of income and ability to consume, but also by a hierarchy of power often interrelated to other divisions based on differences of race, sex, culture etc.

As a result individual behaviour is often contradictory. The car owner you refer to for instance may at different times be opposed to motorway extensions because they are a lover of the countryside, support public transport because other members of their family need it, and argue for traffic safety measures which restrict car use because they have kids who are vulnerable, but in the immediate situation are unlikely to get rid of their car.

It is only in the PROCESS of an expanding collective resistance to the system that SOME of these divisions can be overcome and the contradictions in individual behaviour and between individual and collective behaviour be resolved.

9. Collective resistance can only work if it is grounded in the real interests of those involved. Since it starts in a piece-meal fashion from different sectors of workers with different IMMEDIATE interests, the starting point will rarely provide an immediate basis of unity with others.

So for instance, opposition to the JSA by unemployed workers will often initially be in conflict with workers in the Employment Service. In this situation abstract appeals for unity are at best futile and at worst could disarm the organisation of the unemployed. It is a fact however that ES workers along with other employed workers have an interest in seeing unemployment neutralised as a force for lowering wages and conditions (quite apart from the fact that they could all be unemployed themselves at sometime or another). So at another level there is a common interest between employed and unemployed.

Achieving a PRACTICAL unity in the light of this is inevitably a contradictory process, which involves developing and changing the balance of power between different sections of our class and creating new material situations in the course of struggle which make it both desirable and possible for those involved to join together.

The recent dispute involving Liverpool dockers - a formerly well-paid section of our class, but not through the function of their work exercising any particular power over other workers as compared with some relatively low paid ES workers! - shows on a very small scale how things can change in the course of struggle.

Firstly it is worthy of note how older dockers steadfastly refused for over two years increasing offers of redundancy payments and pensions, so highly did they value the feelings of solidarity and community of their fellow dockers and the wider working class and so committed were they to the future of younger workers. Payments that would have secured for many, their remaining lives in terms of

home, car and holidays abroad!

Secondly, we have witnessed a growing mutual support between the dockers and other workers in struggle - most notably the very low paid, mostly Asian women workers at Hillingdon hospital, Turkish workers here and abroad, Magnet workers, and anti-motorway and anti-runway campaigners, amongst others.

10. Civilisation - that is class society in all its present and past forms – has always been divided into rich and poor, with vast disparities geographically in levels of wealth. Trying to define class in terms of income and consumption tells us nothing about how today's modern capitalist society operates as compared with previous tribal, slave, feudal, Asiatic, mercantile or other forms of society. It provides no clues as to how and why certain sections of workers and not others engage in collective struggle against the system at particular junctions in time.

Periodically, throughout the history of capitalism workers have, on both a small and large scale, joined together in common struggle irrespective of their differing levels of income or consumption. At high points of struggle, workers - employed and unemployed and from all walks of life - have found common cause against the capitalist economy and state. Underlying the variety of forms of struggle has been our common experience of exploitation and alienation through wage labour and commodity production.

In the long term this experience provides a basis for unified action internationally against the system as a whole. In the shorter term it is the progress of the struggle itself and the shifting balance of power which will define which side people are on at any given time. Our experience suggests that relative income and consumption levels will not be the most important factor in this determination.

BOOK REVIEWS

Work, Marx's Critique, and Demand-Led Strikes: Two Recent Publications From India

A BALLAD AGAINST WORK (62 pages)
REFLECTIONS ON MARX'S CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY (45 pages)
Both published in 1997 and available free from Collectivities c/o Majdoor Library, Autopin Jhuggi, N.I.T., Faridabad 121001, India,
or on the internet at
http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/2379

We have no hesitation in recommending *A Ballad Against Work* as a well written, easy to read expose of the realities of life for us wage slaves whether living in Europe or India, a reality hidden behind the ideologies and mystification daily pumped out by governments, media, trade unions, and religious authorities everywhere. The pamphlet explains the real life extension of the working day/year for millions of workers despite the official reduction of working hours proclaimed by legislation and trade union agreements. On top of this most workers have suffered a major intensification of work. These two aspects of wage labour have had appalling results for our physical and mental well-being that are amply illustrated in the pamphlet with facts, figures and individual examples. Management strategies (by business, the state and trade unions) to screw us in various ways are explained and illustrated along with some interesting and occasionally novel ways in which groups of workers have sought to fight back.

This pamphlet is an invaluable addition to all revolutionaries' agitation and educational armoury.

Reflections on Marx's Critique of Political Economy explains a number of basic and still valid Marxist propositions. Despite assurances to the contrary I think some prior understanding of Marx's economic analysis IS necessary for the reader to properly evaluate the author's criticism of the historical limitations of Marx's analysis and the faults in subsequent Marxist and Marxist-Leninist analysis. Clearly there are both contradictions and historical limitations in the works of Marx, but as the very publication of this pamphlet in 1997 shows, there is no better starting point for understanding the functioning of the capitalist economy.

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Work, Marx's Critique and Demand-Led Strikes

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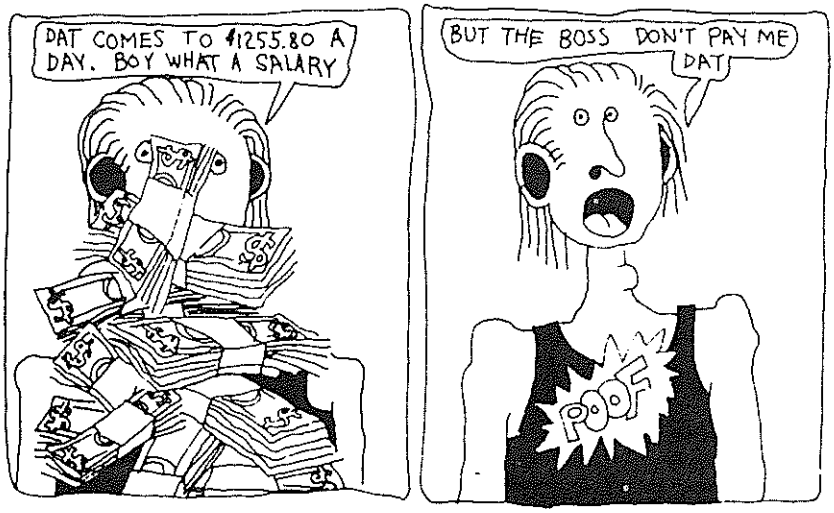
The author is critical of Marx's concentration of his economic analysis on capitalism in its pure abstracted state rather than as it exists in the real world in relation to pre-capitalist economies. Personally I always thought that, correctly interpreted, this approach strengthened the opposition of genuine revolutionaries to capitalism as such and not just to capitalism in its various backward or undeveloped forms. It is nonetheless true that Marx's comments on some of the particular historic forms of capitalist ownership in his time and his thoughts on where the changes he observed might lead can provide, and were certainly used by some to provide, a Marxist justification for subsequent leftist support for state capitalism. There is equally much else in what both Marx and Engels wrote to support opposition to all forms of state capitalism.



The historical and continuing role of the state in the economy is well explained and the author does a good demolition job on the economic absurdities underpinning leftist theories of monopoly capitalism and imperialism.

The author rightly stresses the historical distinctiveness of mercantile and usurers "capital" and the continuing importance of simple commodity production to modern capitalism. Whether or not capitalism could in practice exist purely on its own basis without substantial areas of non-capitalist and simple commodity production I'm not sure. It is certainly true that purely capitalist relations are continuing to expand both socially and geographically, producing major problems in the process.

Despite some minor reservations I think this pamphlet is worth reading.

Lastly I would like to comment on an issue only briefly alluded to in ***A Ballad Against Work***, but developed more in correspondence with the author. In the ***Ballad*** the author states:

"Lockouts by bureaucrats and strikes by representatives involve direct intimidation of workers. Dismissals and physical attacks are what wage workers bear during both lockout and strike, and from representatives and bureaucrats."

The author reinforces this view in correspondence as follows:

"What is known and propagated as struggles of wage-workers are unified, centralised, unifocal struggles on the basis of factory, branch or region around a charter of demands. We have participated in some of these kinds of struggles and are acquainted with many covering a period of twenty years. We have come to realise that these are pre-meditated traps laid down by managements, unions and state apparatuses to implement policies of work-intensification, retrenchment, wage-cut and degrading working conditions. These struggles are in fact struggles of managements, unions and state-apparatuses against wage-workers because:

- control of wage-workers through representation and delegation is ensured
- imposing of the deceptive power of the negotiating table
- provides focused target for repressive apparatuses
- demands of unity ensure that different opinions are erased and voices of dissent are muzzled
- insulation and isolation from wage-workers of other factories, branches and regions ensured and
- dispersion of wage-workers is facilitated."

The author goes on to illustrate the above with a number of convincing examples from India and tentatively suggests that the long running Liverpool dockers dispute also illustrates the same points. I could also add some examples of my own from the European experience but this still leaves some unresolved problems.

The author is right in what he says about the typical traditional demand-led strike of the unions and also right to emphasise the importance of many small, and not so small, everyday struggles of workers that take place outside and often against the unions, in undermining capitalist authority. It must certainly be part of the work of revolutionary groups to report, discuss and popularise such activities.

I think in the above process the author has perhaps 'thrown the baby out with the bathwater'. If our class is to move from resistance to capitalist attacks towards the overthrow of capitalism then at some stage we must move to more open, direct, large scale co-ordinated actions. Strikes and occupations involving the imposition of class needs must surely be part of this process? In practice workers' own

"demands" as opposed to those of the unions and political parties are likely to arise in the early stages of such actions. A move from the psychology of "demands" to a psychology of direct imposition of needs seems unlikely to take place in one fell swoop. In this process there are certainly some serious dangers of representation and hierarchy emerging but they cannot be avoided by simply refusing to countenance open organisation and confrontation with the system.

I GET $2.75 AN HOUR. THAT'S $19.25 A DAY, $96.25 A WEEK
THERE'S A DIFFERENCE OF $6,182.75 BETWEEN WHAT I MAKE AND WHAT I GET. BUT DA BOSS SAYS DATS BECAUSE OF OVER HEAD

Even in the immediate situation I do not think it is beyond the ingenuity of workers, starting from an official strike or a lockout to extend and subvert the purposes and control of the union bosses and employers. There are numerous cases, including the Liverpool dockers dispute, where this has happened in at least a small way. The Liverpool dockers are aware that they were manoeuvred into a dispute and then a lockout by the employers. How they might have responded better than they did has been the subject of much discussion. An immediate occupation right at the start was actually proposed by some and would certainly have created an early impact though as we all know there are other potential problems with this tactic. Possibly they could have crossed the initial picket line and engaged in other forms of passive resistance and sabotage but who is to say that a lockout could still not have been imposed later? It is a complex situation and at the end of the day victory depends on wider support and hitting the employers where it hurts i.e. in their pockets.

More discussion of these ideas can be found in ***Collective Action Notes*** no. 13 available from the Subversion address - send a large s.a.e. ***A Ballad Against Work*** is also available from ***Subversion*** or ***Collective Action Notes*** - for the *CAN* address see page 19.

Trade Unions and the Capitalist Left

In this reply to a regular correspondent we explain in greater detail two of the points in our statement of "What We Stand For" (see page 1): our attitude towards trade unions, and our opposition to the political organisations of capitalism's Left wing.

Basically we think that in the conditions of modern day capitalism a serious attack on our class can only be resisted by going "outside and against" the unions. Certainly an offensive against the system and the possibility of revolution emerging from this would not be possible within the framework of the trade unions (or any other union form).

How this has happened to some extent in the past and might happen again in the future is however a practical question. It is not achieved by small revolutionary groups, still less individuals, taking up moral positions towards existing unions and their activities. What we do as revolutionaries is guided by our historical understanding of the role of unions, but it depends on the particular situation we are addressing.

It can vary most obviously according to the general level and intensity of class struggle in the local and world context. It could also vary to some extent depending on the nature of a particular struggle, the unions involved, the workplace and the local history of struggle and local culture.

We have to judge what we do in terms of how it will help (if at all?) move the class struggle forward and increase the confidence, solidarity and autonomy of our class.

For Subversion then - a small group operating in Britain in 1998 - we do not oppose individual membership of trade unions. Generally speaking we do oppose taking up official positions (even unpaid ones), but some members have occasionally in the past temporarily become shop stewards where they thought, on balance, this was useful to advance a particular dispute (mainly because this was the easiest way to get meetings organised in a situation where the level of struggle was low).

The point of this long preamble is to stress that the above position isn't so much a matter of principle as of practice and tactics. We can imagine, for instance that in a country with a totalitarian political regime and compulsory membership of a government union that individual revolutionaries would belong to that union out of necessity. On the other hand in some countries now (e.g.

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Trade Unions and the Capitalist Left

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France and Italy) where union membership is low and divided between numerous different political and religiously affiliated unions, but where there is a history of independent struggle against both unionised and non-unionised workers, revolutionaries might refuse to join any union. The point is to move struggle beyond the framework of the unions and unionism in whatever practical way we can. Hope that's clear?

On your second question about the "capitalist left"...Capitalism involves the domination of society by commodity production (the market, buying and selling, money, etc.) based on the extraction of surplus value by a minority which owns and controls (either directly or indirectly) the means of production and distribution.

That said, there are many ways of organising and managing capitalism from individual ownership, through partnerships, joint stock companies, trusts, local and national state enterprises, multinational companies and co-operatives, etc. There are also various forms of political organisation of the state depending on historical development and local conditions. Revolutionaries oppose capitalism whatever form it takes.

Generally the "left" has favoured various forms of state ownership and control sometimes in association with 'co-operative' ventures. They have not opposed - in practice - commodity production, wage labour and the state. More often than not in times of intense class struggle the 'left' has proved itself to be the saviour of capitalism not its gravedigger and this despite the "good" intentions of some individuals within it! Similarly some anarchists whilst opposing the "state" (at least in theory) still promote a form of decentralised market economy - they are really just radical liberals not revolutionaries.

For all these reasons revolutionaries refuse to join "fronts" with organisations of the capitalist left. This doesn't of course mean that we can't work with individual 'leftists' in various practical ways for limited objectives - as we have for instance in anti-JSA groups, dockers support groups, some environmental groups etc. and in particular workplace or other struggles.

I GOT APARTMENT + CTA TYPE OVERHEAD AN DA BOSS HAS GOT A 4 STORY MANSION + A LIMOSINE OVER HIS HEAD
THEN THE GOVERNMENT TAKES OUT ABOUT 20% FOR THE WAR LEAVING ME ABOUT $80.00 AND THEN I PAY PAY INTO SOCIAL SEC. IN CASE DA BOSS LAYS ME OFF, AND STATE TAX, MEDICAL INSURANCE AND PENSION. I CLEAR ABOUT $70.00 TAKE HOME PAY
I GUESS THEY CALL IT TAKE-HOME-PAY CAUSE THATS THE ONLY PLACE I CAN AFFORD TO GO WITH IT.
AND,
DAT MAKES ME MAD

Important notice: Publication of the final frame of this strip does not indicate any intention to dismiss critics of capitalism as insane, nor any agreement with dominant notions of so-called "mental illness".

GANDALF 3

The "GANDALF 3" - Saxon Wood, Noel Molland and Steve Booth - were sentenced to 3 years in prison under the conspiracy laws after being found guilty of inciting "persons unknown" by publishing news of environmental and animal rights direct actions in *Green Anarchist* (GA) and the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) supporters' newsletter. While we are opposed to the politics of Green Anarchist and the ALF, we extend our solidarity to these targets of state repression which could just as easily have been aimed elsewhere.

On 27 March the Gandalf 3 were released after four and a half months in jail, pending an appeal against their convictions, on a date to be arranged. Meanwhile the trial on the same charges of Robin Webb, with possibly Paul Rogers, is going ahead, starting on 27 April at Portsmouth Crown Court. (At a pre-trial hearing on 14 April it will be decided whether they will be tried together or separately).

Up-to-date news about all of this, and information about meetings and events organised in support of the various defendants, can be obtained from the London Gandalf Support Campaign c/o London Greenpeace, Panther House, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1X 0AP (email care of lgp@envirolink.org) or on the internet at www.cbuzz.co.uk/SchNEWS.

The Dead-End of 'Charter' Politics

(continued from page 20)

wages system, antagonistic division of society between bosses and workers etc. will be maintained. This is especially true of points 2 ("The right to join a trade union..."), 3 ("The right to work...") and 5 ("Defence of the Welfare State...").

Accompanying this economic programme are other demands amounting to the sort of democratic modernisation of the political apparatus long promoted by liberal and leftist supporters of the system e.g. "Equal rights for all", "The right of citizenship within a democracy", and so on. The implementation of these measures would serve no other purpose than to shore up the system and further integrate workers as atomised individual citizens into the system that exploits and oppresses us.

Completing the line-up are a few points thrown in reflecting links with Reclaim the Streets activists, plus other old favourites like nuclear disarmament and British troops out of Ireland. In short, there's at least something here for everyone.

This long leftist shopping list is expressed entirely in the language of "human rights". "Demands" appearing to assert "rights" and "freedoms" which are supposed to already exist (or which it is believed ought to exist) become in practice an appeal to the ruling class and its state to provide these things, as can be seen for example in the number of points in the Charter which require the repeal or reversal of current legislation and policy. Perhaps this is why the Charter calls for "Abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords" but not abolition of the House of Commons - presumably MPs will still be needed to pass all the necessary legislation.

Nowhere is there any recognition of the fact that in class-divided capitalist society we have no inalienable "rights" as "humans", and that the only "rights", "freedoms" etc workers "enjoy" are those which at any particular time we as a class are powerful enough to assert and maintain. Some of the measures "demanded" in the Charter would only be possible if workers were already strong enough and militant enough to impose them anyway. An example is point 10 which demands: "The right of workers to organise internationally to resist injustice and oppression, to reclaim the planet and put an end to war". If workers were strong enough to achieve these objectives wouldn't we just be going right ahead and doing it? The idea that the "right" to do it has to be "demanded" is simply a measure of our weakness.

To sum up, the Charter approach is a huge diversion away from the task of class organisation and promotion of united struggle and direct action in our own interests, into support for reform and modernisation of capitalism. It may well reflect the political aspirations of dockers stewards or left-wing groups influential in their support, but it is not an expression of independent class struggle or the need to overthrow capitalism.

NOTICEBOARD

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The Best of Subversion, a selection of articles from the first 11 issues, costs £1.00 inc. p&p. **The Second Best of Subversion** is a selection of articles from issues 11 to 20 and costs £2.00 inc. p&p.

RECOMMENDED READING

If you like Subversion, you could also check out:

Organise! Journal of the Anarchist Communist Federation, and ***Resistance***, new bi-monthly agitational news-sheet, from ACF c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Wildcat Write to: BM Cat, London WC1N 3XX (don't mention Wildcat on the envelope)

Aufheben c/o Prior House, Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY.

Collective Action Notes POB 22962, Balto., MD 21203, USA.

SUBVERSION WEB SITE

If you have access to the internet, check out the Subversion web site! There you'll find back issues of *Subversion* (nos. 12 and 17-22), copies of *The Best of Subversion* and *Second Best of Subversion*, and our two pamphlets, *Labouring in Vain: Why Labour is not a Socialist Party* and *Ireland: Nationalism and Imperialism: The Myths Exploded.*

Publications by other groups include Year Minus One Press's *A Day in The Life of The Car* (1989), three old Wildcat pamphlets - *Capitalism and Its Revolutionary Destruction* (1984), *How Socialist is the SWP?* (1985) and *Class War on the Home Front: Revolutionary Opposition to WWII* (1986) - along with the present-day Wildcat group's *Unmasking the Zapatistas.*

Key texts from the history of the workers' movement include Sylvia Pankhurst & Anton Pannekoek's *Communism versus Reforms* (1974 Workers' Voice reprint), and four items related to the German Revolution (1918-23): *The Origins of the Movement for Workers' Councils in Germany*; *The Wilhelmshaven Revolt*; *Introduction to 'Left Communism' in Germany 1914-23*; and *Summary of Fundamental Principles of Communist Production and Distribution* (GIK, 1931). On the same theme, there are memoirs by Jan Appel and Otto Ruhle.

Besides all this there is a list of other web sites you'll probably be interested in if you like Subversion.The web site address is

http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/8195

You can email us from the web site, or via this address

knightrose@geocities.com

Our postal address is

Subversion, Dept 10, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW England, UK

The Dead-End of 'Charter' Politics

Why the "People's' Charter" is not the sort of extension of the struggle that the Liverpool dockers really needed

One of the art forms created by surrealist artists such as Marcel Duchamp was the 'cabinet of curiosities'. These were random collections of objects which left the viewer to try to figure out their inter-relationship and overall meaning. The "People's Charter for Social Justice", launched originally by the Merseyside Port Shop Stewards Committee, is a similar sort of strange mixture of elements.

Draft and revised versions of the Charter have appeared in issues of the Dockers' Charter newspaper published by the Liverpool Dock Shop Stewards Committee. The Charter is a reflection of the desire on the part of many Liverpool dockers and their supporters to see the development of a wider movement of opposition to the present attacks on our class. This ambition has been left unfulfilled because of the absence of any widespread upsurge of class struggle in Britain while the dockers' struggle was taking place. In its place the dockers and their supporters have fallen back on the traditional campaign-type politics of 'the left', and it is this which is encapsulated in the Charter.

The Charter is thus an expression of one of the weaknesses of the Liverpool dockers' struggle rather than any of its strengths. Although the locked-out Merseyside dockers were unable to impose their demand for full reinstatement of the sacked Mersey Docks workers, they have shown amazing and inspiring courage, solidarity and determination in their struggle. Unable to draw in other dockers in Britain already subjected to wholesale casualisation, they travelled the world to gain international support, established their own 'Women of the Waterfront' women's support group, forged links with strikers in other parts of the country, and found common cause with environmental activists struggling against capitalism's expansion of the motorways and incursions into our public and social space. Faced with the hostility and obstruction of the national apparatus of the Transport & General Workers' Union they went directly to other workers whenever possible, using the official union machinery where they had to or by-passing it where necessary and if possible.

If the struggle didn't go beyond the limits of trade unionism this says more about the lack of resonance in the wider class struggle than it does about the dockers' own efforts. In general the links made were directly with other workers in struggle and were based on straightforward solidarity and mutual aid. Most of these industrial struggles like those by Magnet Kitchens and Hillingdon hospital workers have been relatively small-scale and isolated. There hasn't been a large group of workers in struggle in Britain where a genuine unified and joint action could have been made possible.

Not a lot to do with the dockers' charter but a terrific picture nonetheless.

The "People's Charter for Social Justice" is a less than poor parody of the sort of extension of their struggle which the dockers really needed. It is an at times incoherent and self-contradictory mish-mash of "demands". Basically the political programme underlying the Charter is clapped-out 'Old Labour' welfarist state capitalism. The Charter has been criticised for not making it clear that "All the major social injustices are caused by capitalism" and that "we are not able to fully achieve the demands of the People's Charter within the present system" (letter from a London Support Group member, Dockers Charter no.16, June 1997). In fact no going beyond capitalism seems to be envisaged and most of the "demands" implicitly accept that the

(continued on page 19)

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Subversion

PUBLIC SECTOR CUTS

UNITING OUR STRUGGLES?

As the annual budget setting process got underway in local authorities around January, the local and national press started filling up with startling news of drastic cuts in almost every conceivable local service. A couple of months later there was apparently contradictory news in some cases of jobs and services being saved!

In fact nothing had really been saved, it was just part of the usual public bargaining between local and central government aimed at fixing us into the democracy game and softening us up for what were by any account very real cuts, affecting real people.

These real cuts, many of them devastating in their effects on the most disadvantaged of our class, have not passed without protest. In Manchester alone there have been a good dozen separate campaigns involving marches, demonstrations and petitions by users and workers alike. But each campaign has pursued its own particular case separately and in isolation, only occasionally, and usually accidentally, coming together face-to-face. Even on these occasions there has been no resultant unity or joining of forces. The situation in Manchester, as far as we can tell, seems fairly typical in this respect. These type of campaigns have been easy meat for the skillful 'divide and rule' tactics of the politicians and union leaders. Continued on Page 3

INSIDE:

Somalia

Militant and Gay Liberation

Class War

Spain 1936

free!

What We Stand For

We meet regularly for political discussion and to organise our activities. The following is a brief description of our basic political principles:

- We are against all forms of capitalism; private, state and self-managed.

- We are for communism, which is a classless society in which all goods are distributed according to needs and desires.

- We are actively opposed to all ideologies which divide the working class, such as religion, sexism and racism.

- We are against all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" movements such as the IRA.

- The working class (wage labourers, the unemployed, housewives, etc.), is the revolutionary class; only its struggle can liberate humanity from scarcity, war and economic crisis.

- Trade unions are part of the capitalist system, selling our labour power to the bosses and sabotaging our struggles. We support independent working class struggle, in all areas of life under capitalism, outside the control of the trade unions and all political parties.

- We totally oppose all capitalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. We are against participation in fronts with these organisations.

- We are against participation in parliamentary elections; we are for the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class and the establishment of organisations of working class power.

- We are against sectarianism, and support principled co-operation among revolutionaries.

- We exist to actively participate in escalating the class war towards communism.

Want to Get Involved?

If you agree with our basic principles "What We Stand For" and are in general agreement with the views expressed in articles in this and other issues of **SUBVERSION**, then why not get involved?

There are a number of ways you could do this.

1. Join **SUBVERSION**. You can do this if you are in agreement and live in the north of England. We have members in Manchester, Leeds and Oldham.

2. Write to us and let us know you are out there!

3. Take extra copies of **Subversion** to give to friends or distribute at meetings (be realistic, though not pessimistic, about the number you might be able to pass on).

4. Try writing short articles for future issues. We will happily give you advice on what the right length is, and will make suggestions about topics if you want.

5. Send us some money! Cheques and POs payable to **SUBVERSION**.

6. Arrange to meet us.

7. If meeting us is difficult, you might like to have a local contact address published in **SUBVERSION** and use this to find out if there are others locally of a like mind.

APPEAL

*We've always aimed to produce Subversion for free distribution. In the past we've been able to do this either through using cheap facilities in Manchester, or more recently on our own press. Unfortunately, we can no longer use the cheap local facilities - along with other political groups we've been banned by Manchester Council! We've also been experiencing some severe teething problems with our own press. That's why our pamphlet, **Labouring in Vain** ,is taking so long to get out.*

So once again we've had to have an issue printed commercially.

Production and mailout of this issue will cost over £200.

So we're asking you, our readers to make any donations you can, hoever big or small.

Make any cheques or PO's payable to Subversion..

Uniting Our Struggles
continued from front page

There have also been a rash of local strikes by council workers. Some as in Islington and Newham in London involving over a thousand workers. But again these strikes have remained separate and there has been no movement towards any kind of coordinated national strike action.

Islington strikers burn letters from the council.

In addition to the obvious hardship to those who have lost services or been made redundant, conditions for the workers remaining have grown steadily worse, with mounting management pressure to increase productivity, all against the background of a compulsory competitive tendering process accepted by Labour councils and unions alike. Politicians and senior management in the councils are carrying out a determined campaign to weed out troublesome workers, not just political activists but also those suffering from ill health or anyone with a 'bad attitude' who isn't willing to commit themselves 'body and soul' to their new corporate strategies. Despite all the trendy talk about teamwork and equal opportunities 'management by fear' is returning with a vengeance!

A Hackneyed Tale

The following description of conditions for workers at the London borough of Hackney is very familiar to those of us working for councils in the North West:

"In the case of local community activists, the Council has reportedly withdrawn facilities for some groups to use its properties for meetings - and in one case the local Labour Party allegedly discussed setting lawyers and private investigators on its critics. And in the case of Council employees, where Members and Officers have real power, the picture is a horror story. It's worth selectively listing just what's going on, for comment is simply superfluous: it has been made a sackable offence for employees to squat in Council properties; it's a serious disciplinary offence to talk to the media or to Councillors about Council services (with real sackings to back the threat up); every employee has been asked to register with the Council if they belong to any voluntary group active in Hackney; despite condemnation by the NCCL/Liberty, being in arrears of Council rent or of poll tax renders people ineligible for many jobs (again backed, according to one union, by at least one sacking for poll tax non-registration and more allegedly in the pipeline, plus staff being moved jobs because the Council itself has cocked up their rent payments); the Council has retrospectively decided to use personnel and payroll data for totally different purposes, namely hunting for people in difficulties with rent and poll tax. "New Management Techniques" are all the rage, including the Total Quality Management approach that was lauded as an exemplar of good private management in last year's American election...by the rabidly right-wing Republican party.

"And, last but not least, there are corruption, racism, and a massive wave of disciplinary actions with many sackings. According to the local NALGO, it

recently had over 100 members facing investigation for Gross Misconduct, with

Uniting our Struggles

continued from page 3

over 98% of them black, yet it believes that many of the accused are completely innocent, and that for many others, even if disciplinary action was conventionally justified, management is going for dismissal when it's totally disproportionate to any "offence". Meanwhile, the local paper reports humiliating results for the Council when it defends its earlier dismissals - but no reinstatements, so the climate of fear is perpetuated. It is widely alleged, including by some dismissed staff, that the "corruption" and "fraud" allegedly involved in many dismissals go far higher, but that certain leading local figures are simply covering it all up.

"To fight these attacks and abuses is far from easy. Politically, the claim that it's all designed to improve services goes down well with anyone who knows the real standards on offer in the last few years. Real fraud and corruption are a permanent feature of local government, not just of Hackney, so repression under the banner of fighting it carries a lot of moral authority - even if close study of the details shows many people being framed and scapegoated on nonsense "evidence" and charges. And one pretext for the new management techniques is to better know how resources are really allocated, in order to use them more efficiently: who could argue with that?

"Nor does your correspondent want to act as adviser to the local Labour Party dissidents: however good their intentions, the facts of life in local government, its power over local residents and workers, means that promises for a distant future will have to be treated with caution even if anyone tries to make good on them. The unions themselves are not much better: member-involvement is poor, and most employees are frightened; on top of that grass-roots weakness, it turns out that many of the full-time officials, like many senior council officers, are leading Labour local government figures in nearby local Councils. And dismissed employees seeking legal redress keep discovering that law firms specialising in industrial relations...are also specialists in work for their friendly neighbourhood Labour Parties."[from RED BANNER].

We're sure this list of nasty 'goings-on' in Hackney could be substantially added to by many of our readers from their own experience elsewhere.

In Manchester there have been numerous 'disciplinaries' leading to sackings, which despite ritual union protests have gone largely uncontested and the situation is getting worse. Undoubtedly senior management in the local authorities are having some success in this war of attrition.

WHAT NOW?

This growing frustration of workers in the local authorities, the rash of protest campaigns and sporadic strikes in the public services, and in particular the initial angry nationwide response to the announced mine closures, have convinced many activists that there is both a need and a potential to unite struggles, particularly around the public services.

This 'feeling' has been reflected in the organisation recently of several different national conferences, all with the common acclaimed theme of "uniting struggles amongst workers and in the community". They have been sponsored by an assortment of semi-official trade union bodies, anti-cuts campaigns, miners support groups and others. We have attended two in Manchester and have seen material for some of the others.

On the positive side they have allowed some exchange of information between some very different groups of workers in struggle. People attending them may well have come away at least feeling that they weren't 'on their own'. The conference participants have also expressed genuine distrust and often outright hate of politicians of all hues as well as union leaders. But that unfortunately is about as far as it goes.

The predominant ideological

influence of the left at these conferences has proved yet again to be a dead weight on the development of any original thinking or effective organisation.

The genuine desire for real united class action has been squeezed into the theoretical formulae of this or that left-wing group. Grandiose, meaningless resolutions have been subjected to tortuous compromise wordings that reflect the relative strengths of the left factions in attendance, following on from predictable and pre-rehearsed debates. Stale old slogans are dusted off and presented as new. Those who have stopped thinking altogether parrot their 'demands' for the TUC to call a general strike. The more adventurous, but equally 'out of touch', suggest we call a general strike ourselves! In both cases we find that this 'general strike' is meant to be little more than a token 24-hour stoppage anyway!

PICTURE: BRYN GRIFFITHS

No-one is actually analysing the common causes and threads running through the struggles which are taking place. No-one is asking what potential there is and how we can unite in common action, with common demands, the struggles already underway or about to start. The 'unity' that is continually talked about seems little more in most cases than the lining up of various 'campaigns' on the same platform or demo, with any 'link' being provided behind the scenes by one of the left groupings.

Very occasionally, the recognition seems to surface that it's not just the Labour and trade union leaders that are an obstacle to the development of effective class struggle, but the whole organisational form and mode of operation of the organisations they lead. That there is no trade union and labour 'movement', just a body of institutions that were never up to the mythology created about them and which were long ago integrated into the apparatus of capitalism.

But clearly the full horror of this recognition for people, many of whom have devoted their lives to working inside (or alongside) these institutions is just too painful to accept. Material reality can't be allowed, in the end, to intrude on their cozy assumptions.

Thus such people can say on the one hand "...the remedies will have to come from below and will take place despite, and in opposition to, the leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions", and in the next breath make demands on Labour Councillors to reject their role as bosses and recommend us to "...struggle to force union leaders to lead a fight or make way for those who will". All this demonstrates at best confusion and at worst deliberate manipulation.

Of course if there is enough pressure from below - not in the form of branch resolutions and the like, but through unofficial and wildcat actions - union leaders

Uniting our Struggles

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will respond. They may even call 24-hour 'general strikes'. But the whole purpose of this will be to try and control the movement and smash it!

Independent Class Struggle

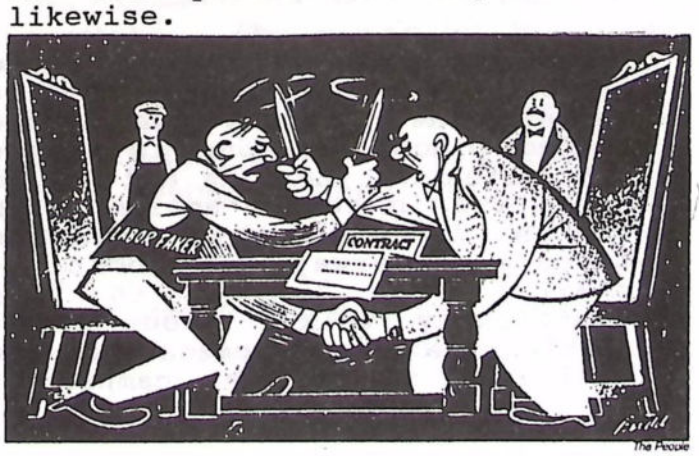
To defend our wages and conditions and our benefits, to fight cuts in services and jobs, to fight for our needs against the requirements of profit and the market, we urgently need to develop an INDEPENDENT movement of our class. Struggles may start off within the confines of trade unionism and under the influence of Labourist ideology but they must rapidly go beyond these confines. They must begin to consciously recognise who the enemy is - not just the traditional establishment, the Tories, churches, judiciary, press, etc., but also the capitalist institutions, like the Labour Party and the trade unions, inside the working class.

Our class, despite the arrogant and pessimistic warnings of the left, is quite capable of this. Without the benefit of the left to advise them and up against Stalinist and military dictatorship Polish workers, briefly in 1981, showed the potential which exists.Theyorganised their own strikes and occupations through mass assemblies and directly elected committees made up of recallable delegates. These actions were coordinated through central committees with delegates from different workplaces and areas. Common demands were thrashed out. Workers in one sector refused to go back unless the demands of all sectors were met. They organised an embryo system of dual power which challenged the apparatus of the state at all levels. There are many other examples.

We need organisations which can help that process along. Not 'rank and file' groups hanging on the coat-tails of the trade unions. Not 'campaign' groups which operate within the framework of capitalist democracy through petitions, lobbies and media stunts.

We need groups that bring together the minority of committed militants in the workplace, independent of union and sectional divisions, to discuss and inform struggles and agitate for their extension wherever practicable. Such groups need to concentrate on the real struggle and not to be sidetracked into union reform campaigns or grandiose schemes to set up new unions, which would just end up the same as the old ones. Outside the workplace we need 'solidarity' groups which promote mutual aid and direct action. Any such groups need to be under the direct control of the people involved, without being tools of different left groups. Some anti-poll tax groups and miners support groups have taken tentative steps towards transforming themselves this last direction but sadly most seem to have been content with a 'campaigning' role.

The conferences so far have given us no confidence that they will play any positive role in developing a genuine independent class movement. Despite this, Subversion will continue to take every opportunity to intervene in such events and would urge others in our political camp to do likewise.



Somalia

Looking at the papers and television before Christmas we saw the familiar images of starvation and death in Somalia. This time, however, there was to be a difference. The Americans were going to sort things out, they were going to deal with the gunmen, feed the hungry ,"Restore Hope", then do the unimaginable and leave. It was like watching the cavalry coming to the rescue in the nick of time.

Looking at those same papers and television broadcasts today we are presented with a different set of images. Apparently the US are leaving, being replaced by the UN. They've fed a lot of people and the risk of starvation has significantly reduced. But, we're led to believe, it's all been a bit of a cock-up. The warlords are still there, their gunmen are still armed, no central power has been re-established. The image that is portrayed of the Americans is one of basically well-meaning, but essentially not very competent do-gooders, who fail to grasp the reality of the situation.

Famine and Debt

This, however, misses a number of key points. Why did the famine in Somalia start in the first place? What were the real intentions of the USA in intervening? What have they achieved as a result?

Somalia is one of the most debt ridden countries in the world. Even in the 1970s its public debt to other countries stood at over 80% of its GNP. It had one of the smallest GNPs in the world, less than $200 per head and tiny exports, with 69% of its $0.09 billion coming from animals. So, in 1977, Somalia

was in a desperate economic situation and could truly be said to be a disaster waiting to happen. Yet aid and loans continued to pour in. Why? The answer was simple, for military reasons.

The most important thing Somalia has to offer is its geographical position. One look at the map on this page shows this. Before 1974 Somalia was supported by the USSR, while its neighbour, Ethiopia, was dominated by the USA. In 1974 there was an abrupt change. The Ethiopian regime of Haile Selassie was ousted and replaced by a pro-Moscow gang. The Americans in turn poured aid and weapons into Somalia, then ruled by Siad Barre. There followed a war between the two countries.

Changing Sides

As long as Ethiopia was under Soviet influence it paid the USA to support the Barre regime in Somalia. Unfortunately for Barre this was not to continue. The pro-Soviet Ethiopian regime was overthrown at the same time as the USSR was finding itself increasingly incapable of supporting client regimes around the world. As it became clear that the USSR was losing the Cold War, the USA realised it no longer needed to support regimes like Barre's to prevent a rivalcontrolling its

oil routes. So the Americans withdrew their support. Military aid stopped.

What was left was an extremely poor country, threatened with famine because of continued droughts and the need to export food to pay off debts, heavily dependent on food aid and awash with arms. With the overthrow of the Barre regime all central authority collapsed, the various clan leaders set about taking over their own regions and controlling the only thing left worth having - food. Whilst the warlords fed their own gangsters millions began to starve and die.

We must repeat, however, that the cause of the starvation is not natural. It is the direct product of the policies of the USA and USSR in the region over the previous 25 years.

Christmas gifts?

So why did the Americans intervene before Christmas? One thing is clear, their motives weren't simple altruism. The USA never does anything that is not in the direct interests of the USA. This has been true of every one of their military adventures since the country was founded.

The end of the 1980's saw the end of the cold war and the collapse of the Soviet Union. We were told it would bring a new era of peace and co-operation. A New World Order, with the United Nations taking a more dominant role in the maintenance of peace and order.

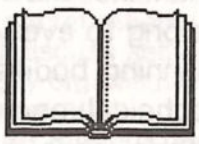
What we've seen instead is something different. The USA remains the world's only superpower, but the end of the Cold War has seen a fragmentation of the old blocs. On top of this the USA's position as the capitalist top dog is being threatened by erstwhile allies. The fiasco in ex-Yugoslavia was partly the result of one of these, the German led-EEC trying to assert itself in Europe. German policy seems to be to incorporate Russia within its sphere, which would
make Europe a very real superpower in its own right. In the Pacific, Japan is carving out its own sphere of influence. The whole Middle East is a centre of potential conflict, even after the Gulf War, with the USA finding its supply of reliable allies dwindling.

Top of the USA's priorities in maintaining its position has been to use the UN as a cloak and legal justification for its activities. So the UN sanctioned the war in the Gulf and subsequent adventures against Iraq. The UN is charged with sorting out ex-Yugoslavia. The UN is supposedly going to take over the operation in Somalia. The USA's main rivals have no permanent seat on the Security Council, so lack real power in that body. It remains firmly under the thumb of the USA.

The Somalia operation achieved a number of things for the USA. Firstly, it was a simple way for the US to prove that it is capable of intervening militarily anywhere it chooses to. This, in itself, serves as a warning to rivals both real and potential. It helps keep wavering allies within the fold. Secondly, there may be no enemy fleet in the Indian Ocean, but it is around the Horn of Africa that a good deal of the USA's oil and nearly all of Europe's oil goes. In an increasingly unstable region of the world, Somalia once again becomes an important area for the USA to be able to control. The USA may be withdrawing most of their troops (5000 are to stay), but they are being replaced by soldiers from client states acting under the banner of the UN. Thus Somalia remains safe. It

matters little that the warlords remain, control over Mogadishu and other key ports is maintained.

The USA has achieved all these goals as a result of Operation Restore Hope. It was, in fact, a major triumph for their foreign policy, and achieved in their terms at comparatively little cost. For the rest of us it serves as a warning that far from the world becoming a safer place, that instability is increasing. Once again we have to recognise that the only real alternative for working people is to make the choice of socialism or capitalist barbarism.



review:

Abraham Guillen, Anarchist Economics: An alternative for a world in crisis. *The economics of the Spanish Libertarian Collectives 1936-39.* Industrial Syndicalist Education League/La Presa, PO Box 29, SWPDO, Manchester 15. £1.00.

This pamphlet adds another volume to the bulging library of anarchist publications which regard the setting up of the workers' and peasants' collectives at the start of the Spanish civil war in 1936 as "one of the most, if not the most, extensive and profound revolutions ever seen".

Abraham Guillen's argument is that the Spanish collectives can serve as the model for a revolutionary alternative to both Western-style capitalism and Eastern-bloc 'communism'. But Guillen picks out from the Spanish events some of the most negative features of that experience, so that in the end his "alternative for a world in crisis" amounts to nothing more than a variation on the same lousy old capitalist theme.

Basically, Guillen promotes a vision of relatively autonomous and self-sufficient communes joined together by market relations (i.e. buying/selling or barter).

On the distribution of goods within each collective he mentions that some of the Spanish collectives "freely distributed among the collectivist landworkers that which was abundant but rationed that which was scarce".

CNT poster for agricultural workers.

This seems to us a reasonable way of tackling the problem of material scarcity which may very well temporarily confront us when capitalism is being overthrown, so long as any rationing system is based on the principle, 'to each according to their needs'.

Guillen however proposes that each person's consumption would be regulated "in accordance with quality and quantity of work done", with "production cards", on which "the value of work done by days is recorded", being used as a kind of "credit

card" or form of money.

The adoption of this principle, 'to each according to their work', would amount to the re-introduction (or rather continuation) of the wages system. And indeed to the extent that similar schemes were actually put into operation in Spain (there were numerous variations on the production card theme and hundreds of different local currencies) the overall thrust of the collectivisation movement was towards the retention of essentially capitalist relations rather than in the direction of socialism/communism.

This can be seen even more clearly in the relations between collectives. As very few collectives were self-sufficient, central warehouses were set up where collectives exchanged their surplus produce among themselves for the goods they lacked. Here hard cash was often dispensed with but the relative proportions in which goods were bartered were still determined by monetary values - for example how many sacks of flour a collective could obtain in exchange for a ton of potatoes was worked out by calculating the value of both in monetary terms - and no collective was allowed to withdraw a sum of goods worth more than those it had deposited.

Guillen wholeheartedly supports this system, describing approvingly how "if local products could not satisfy the consumer, the collective, through its council or appropriate section, obtained, on an equal exchange basis, the goods and services needed", and how "a self-managed system was thus formed, where goods, products and services were exchanged according to their real work-value relationship".

He fails to comprehend how rapidly this system of relations among the collectives would lead to the main purpose of production becoming (or remaining) for exchange via the market rather than to directly meet people's needs. And, once again, insofar as this is what did actually happen in Spain, the collectivisation movement's development was driven by basically capitalist dynamics.

Had the Spanish collectives been moving in a genuinely communist direction the tendency towards self-sufficiency and autonomy for each collective (which Guillen elevates to the level of a "biological principle") would have been reversed in favour of centralised planning by delegate bodies. The wealth produced by each collective would not be regarded as its own private property. Instead, in relations among the collectives the same attitude would prevail as existed within each collective: "The concept 'yours and mine' will no longer exist...Everything will belong to everyone." The role of the central planning bodies would be essentially simple technical ones such as finding out what goods were needed where and arranging their transportation from one place to another.

In Guillen's model there is central co-ordination but it is co-ordination of exchange relationships. Throughout the pamphlet great stress is laid on forms of organisation - "direct democracy", federation, self-management, and so on - but the content of these organisational forms remains in essence a market economy.

To sum up, the "anarchist economics" Guillen supports is simply the dead-end of self-managed capitalism, which is every bit as reactionary as private or state capitalism. The communist society Subversion is fighting for can only be established by the complete destruction of ALL private property, money, wages and markets - whatever their form.

Militant and Gay Liberation

Militant have recently relaunched themselves as "Militant Labour", this time openly admitting their existence, rather than pretending to just be a newspaper with "supporters". They claim they're really going to represent the interests of the working class. here we are printing the second part in our short series written by an ex-member of Militant. It should serve as a timely warning to any who are taking Militant's new guise seriously.

At the end of 1986 around 20-30 members of Militant who were gay held a secret meeting. The aim of this meeting was to discuss setting up a separate caucus and a gay organisation in Militant and the labour movement. Just around two years before this an attempt had been made at setting up this organisation, but documents relating to this matter had fallen into the hands of full time NCO's, hence the need for ultra secrecy this time.

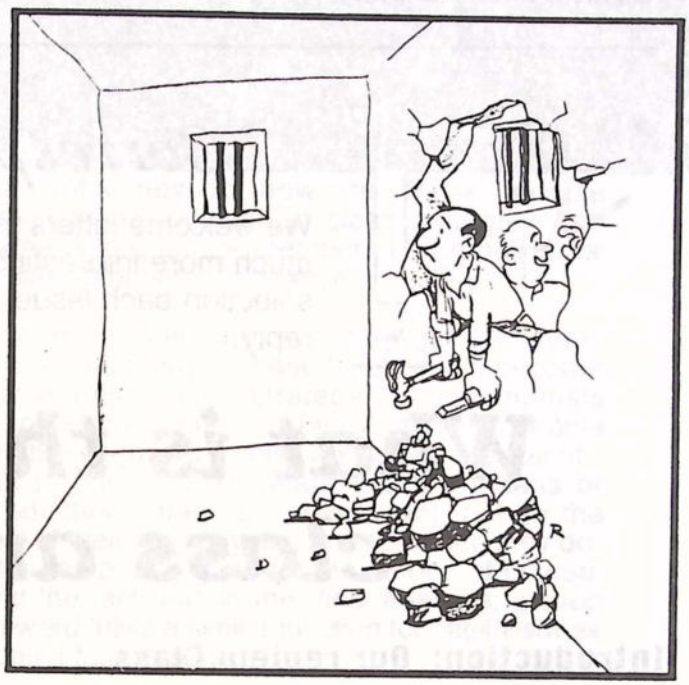
Learning from this, only comrades who were 100% trusted were told and invited. They were to discuss historical and political reasons why gays are oppressed. The meeting was a success and two representatives were sent off to Lyn Walsh to demand an official caucus for lesbians and gays. At first this was rebuffed and the people who had organised the meeting were accused of ultra leftism and acting in a separatist manner.

When threats of INDEPENDENT ORGANISATION and resignations followed if demands were not met, Militant changed its tune.

A year later, at the height of of the campaign against Section 28 pressure began to mount for major articles to appear in Militant.

Back page space was found for coverage of the demonstration against Clause 28 and Gay Pride that year.

The leadership of Militant did not like the self organisation of its gay and lesbian members. The level of discussion and organisation was a threat to the full time apparatus. They had become too loud and too independent. This went against the grain of the members of



Militant being tame and subservient to the organisation.

At a crunch caucus, Lynn Walsh opposed the demands for gays and lesbians having the "democratic right" to choose their own sexuality and and counterposed it to "toleration of lesbians and gay men", thus exposing his and Militant's prejudices.

To screams, boos, hisses and howls of total uproar, Walsh replied, "I meant the 17th Century definition of the meaning of toleration." To many this was the last straw. Over 20 people left Militant for good. Many left over the rest of the year.

Then some 4 years later a pamphlet was printed accommodating gay men and lesbians, fitting them in with the sphere of nationalisation of the top 200 industries, etc

The demand for repeal of Section 28 was then dropped.

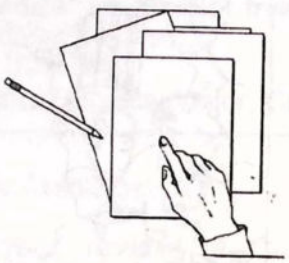
Militant had shown their contempt for gays and lesbians and indeed for the whole working

continued from previous page

Wherever it is active Militant opposes independent activity and organisation by workers - anything that it cannot control itself. If Militant leads the fight then any members of the working class who follow them will be led right up the garden path.

Events in Liverpool and the anti-poll tax campaign should be warning enough.

You have been warned.



Correspondence

We welcome letters from readers. We think it makes for a much more interesting bulletin. We try and publish a selection each issue, along with a properly considered reply.

What is the working class anyway?

Introduction: Our review Class War's book, Unfinished Business, in *Subversion 11*, brought two letters. We publish them here with our reply.

Although having some sympathy with your criticism of Class War, in particular its obsession with 'profile', a few other points I must take issue with. In particular your assertion that Class War in its book 'Unfinished Business' gets into a muddle over class.

You say Class War is wrong to put squaddies in with the working class when the police are then placed as (reactionary thugs of) the middle class. You consider it more accurate to place everyone in relation to the means of production.

As C.W.'s book correctly states though, mutiny within the army is an historical reality that has little parallel within the police force. Thousands of unemployed workers are cornered into taking up shit lives - bound to long contracts within the armed services. Coppers on the other hand are well-screened, well-paid and well-used to sticking the boot directly into the public.

Subversion, being seemingly unaware of this reality, leaves me wondering. Surely Subversion you are not peddling that naive crap that the police are only workers in uniform? If so don't expect sympathy when in an upsurge of struggle you're gunned down by a police force joyously wielding their Armalite toys. Does working class blood have to be spilt time and time again as testament to the failure of blinkered Marxist analysis?

Or, could it be that, having teachers making up [a large part of] Subversion, it is you yourselves who have the hang-up about class?

Arguing, as Subversion have done at length, how teachers are part of the production process, therefore share a common interest in revolution with the rest of the working class. Let's look at this.

Ignoring teachers relatively high salaries and function to condition and control the next generation of workers, there is some truth in what Subversion says.

continued next page

But, despite the prolet-arianisation of the profession, teachers are still professionals and as such enjoy something of a cultural status. This acts as a link to middle class identification in a way not accessible to the majority of the working class.

I have no problem seeing teachers as middle class. This does not mean I declare them first up against the wall. Indeed I welcome thoughtful, committed members of such middle class professions who contribute constructively to the creation of international Communism.

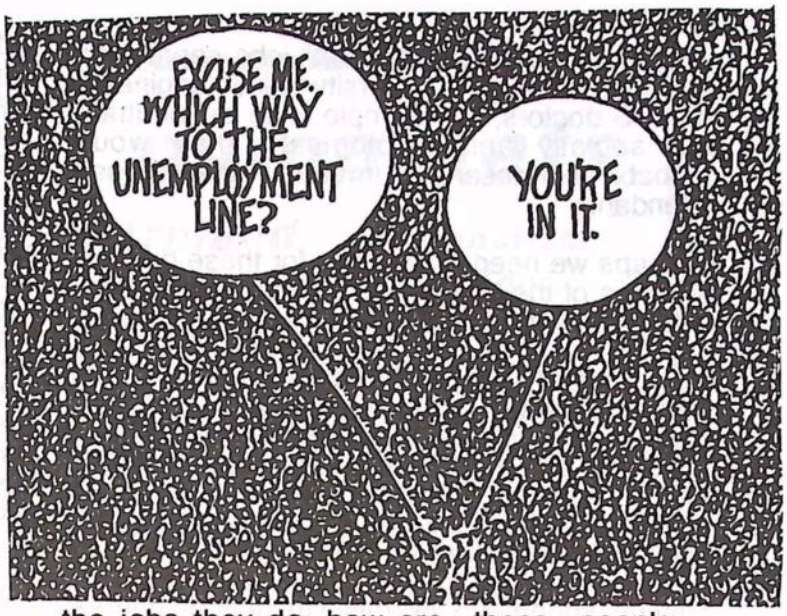
Now if a copper was on fire I wouldn't piss on him. Class War is trying to put this reality into political terms. Not trying to bend reality to fit political theories.
In Solidarity
Harry Roberts Junior, Class War supporter.

Dear Comrades,

In your review of Class War's 'Unfinished Business' you quite rightly argue for a material definition of class as opposed to Class War's ideological mishmash. However, when examining our strategy as communists - in addressing different groups of the proletariat - surely we shouldn't discount all ideological factors? This 'strategy' means our identifying of which groups of people we should spend our time dishing out propaganda to, or talking to, or working with, etc. - and which groups we should be suspicious of and not waste our time on. Obviously we don't bother with our class enemies: the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. But I'd also say shouldn't bother with the professional army, police, etc., and a lot of 'professionals', who have often been university trained (the University itself is an ideological institution which extends beyond its campuses into our everyday lives, like the Church used to).

We are best talking to those people who have a more immediate experience of their class position, those to whom class struggle is, or often becomes, a daily reality - i.e.. the working class (but not all those who are not the big or small bourgeoisie). Anyway, it is these people who engage in proletarian class struggle - it is not, for example, Managers and Experts (who generally act to defeat the working class, of course)

As you say, it is only through class struggle that class consciousness, and the eventual defeat of class society, will come about. How could the manager of a supermarket come to a communist perspective without abandoning his/her job? How could an architect (who decides on designs for proletarian living areas, for example), a journalist, a priest or a social worker remain in their profession if they became communists? More importantly, given



the jobs they do, how are these people going to be involved in class struggle? The same also goes for members of the police or professional army, of course.

In non-revolutionary, and even revolutionary, times hardly any of these types would become communists. Our strategy as communists involves exposing the fact that these people are the enemy of a class conscious proletariat - not by fact of their relation to the means of production (they are proletarian), but by the fact of their ideology and the actual job they do. The same also goes for the unions of course, and the fact that, in the final analysis, a shop steward fulfils a similar function for capitalism as does a foreperson.

Whereas the job of a car park attendant is basically 'neutral', the actual job and day to day existence of a journalist or social worker consists precisely of actively protecting the status quo. They do just the same job as priests used to do (and still do).

Nationalism, for example,is a purely ideological enemy of communism and the working class when it exists amongst the class - but a journalist or social worker is a physical enemy in as much as the person embodies the ideology s/he has accepted and made a living out of. In a revolutionary event people like these will be physically swept aside, however, there will be no revolutionary event if the escalating class struggle hasn't squashed the power of the ideology of nationalism.

The problem for us (strategically) is recognising that some sections of the proletariat are irrevocably lost to bourgeois ideology and that they will ultimately to be smashed physically along with the machinery of state and the bourgeoisie itself. (Universities, for example, should be destroyed).

continued next page

Some professional or "expert" jobs seem more ambivalent though. University trained engineers, or NHS doctors, for example, may be 'neutral' - but socially and ideologically they would probably feel closer to journalists than to car park attendants.

Perhaps we need new labels for these different sections of the proletariat, so we don't resort to calling than 'middle class'.

You are right to argue that a material definition of class is essential, however, I think defining what the class struggle is, or could be, is at least as important, and part of that involves understanding and pointing out the real ideological divisions in the proletariat and exposing everything that is the enemy of communism.

Having suggested all this I'm not, of course, saying that you don't already know it (or know better, which is more likely!), and I realise that your comments in **Subversion 11** were only brief.

Pete Post, Sydney, Australia.

SUBVERSION REPLY

Of these two letters, the one from the Class War supporter is completely off the beam, whereas the second one makes some good points which we partly agree with. To answer all the relevant points we need to have a more precise analysis of "class" than the formula "relationship to the means of production".

The first point to consider is how we decide that one class rather than others has the potential to be revolutionary. Why does the communist strategy for revolution base itself on the (existing) economic struggles of the working class? After all, lots of other people suffer from the present system (Capitalism), such as poor peasants, street vendors etc.
The answer is that when workers need to defend their living standards, their immediate response is to struggle, together with their workmates, against the capitalists who employ them. The immediate response of, say, a street vendor would be to either raise their prices (creating a conflict with their customers, including workers), or alternatively to lower them and undercut the other vendors.

What is distinctive about the workers therefore is that they have an inbuilt and immediate tendency both to conflict with the capitalists and to collective action with other workers (at least in the same factory or same industry - but the potential is there for it to spread). We believe that this already existing conflict (which can never be got rid of by capitalism) is the seed out of which a revolutionary movement can grow. Naturally, this "seed" will have to grow immensely, but there's no other "seed" to rival it.

The key point here is the conflicts that are built in to various social relationships. This is not simply a matter of whether someone earns a wage or not, because certain types of job contain other conflicts in the job itself. So to take the most obvious example, being a cop means having a fundamental conflict with workers who engage in struggle - the fact that cops receive wages is a fact of little significance. The distinction that the Class War supporter makes between them and squaddies however is tenuous, as the army has always been (and always will be) used against serious manifestations of class struggle. There is indeed a history of mutiny in the army but we're talking here about draftees, which is a different matter.

There are other groups of wage earners who, in a less stark way, have conflicts with the working class at large built in to their jobs: teachers, with their role of social control and indoctrination of young workers; lower level bureaucrats whose job involves giving orders to others; people whose job involves taking money from workers, e.g. till operators, bar staff, bus drivers - try getting on a bus and saying you refuse to pay (a conflict between you and the owners of the bus company) and see whose side the driver will take. That doesn't mean that all these sections are our enemies, but rather that they are, to varying degrees, in a contradictory position (unlike the police force which IS our enemy pure and simple). We may not put much effort into talking to the more "dubious" sections but we don't write them off and we recognise that under the right conditions many of them will join in the struggle. This is not a question of "ideology" but of the position of these groups in society, in relation to other groups or classes.

All of this brings us on to the second point to consider - the distinction between the present-day working class, whose day-to-day existence is largely passive (acquiescent towards capitalism) and the revolutionary force that can overthrow capitalism. This latter will grow out of the former, but is not identical to it. The former (which can be called the "class-in-itself") is just a "sociological" category whereas the latter (the class-FOR-itself) is a revolutionary category.

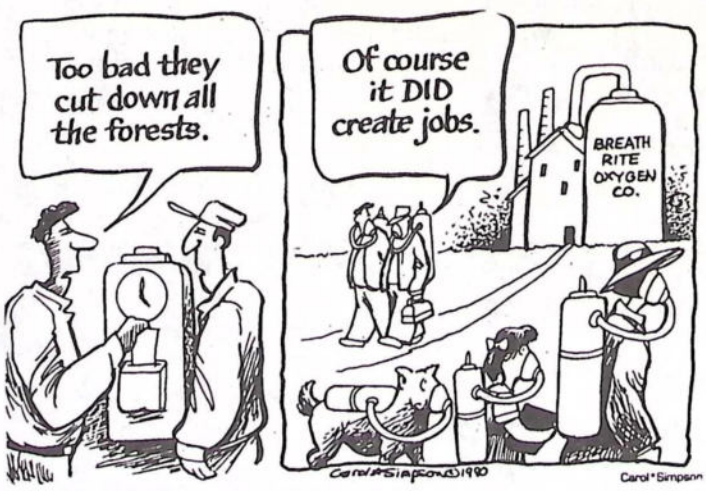
When workers engage in struggle their "nature" changes in that they reject their normal passivity and begin to become a class-for-itself. It is this "class-BECOMING-for-itself" that we support.

Referring to the "Working Class" is vague because there are really several "working classes" - the passive, sociological working class, the conscious communist working class of the future that is overthrowing capitalism and

and the struggling working class ("becoming-for-itself") - this last category is the most important one and shouldn't be confused with the first one (it may be argued that it's the same people but this is wrong because, apart from the fact that it's SOME of the same people not ALL of them, the key point is that it's not a thing that we're talking about but an action, or rather a thing in action - sociology deals in "things" but the "class-in-action" is a revolutionary concept).

Questions such as "are coppers part of the working class?" are therefore in some sense pointless since they refer to membership of the "sociological" working class. They are certainly not going to become part of the "class-in-action" which is the "class" that WE support.

To come back to the question of "relationship to the means of production" as the formula for defining class, the most important "defining" that we have to do is to define how the "class-in-action" will come into being (a constant, repeated event) and how it will develop. Among the factors which determine this, "relationship to the means" of production" is the foremost, but is insufficient because it implies "relationship to property", i.e. being a wage earner or not, whereas the other factors considered in the first part of this reply can be just as important. The best way to put it is probably "relationship to the developing class struggle" - this being determined by all the factors mentioned above.



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IRA: ANTI-WORKING CLASS BASTARDS!

The IRA have once again shown their true colours with a disgusting act of callous brutality towards ordinary working class people, this time on the streets of Warrington.

They are an organisation that claims to be fighting against "oppression", fighting for "freedom" - but their actions should demonstrate to everyone just exactly where the working class would fit into their "free" society. Right at the bottom, oppressed and exploited, the same as in every other capitalist society.

In this they are the same as every other "National Liberation Movement". In the name of the "freedom for an oppressed people" they fight for the freedom of the local capitalist class to exploit "their" workers - and these latter are conned into fighting to exchange one lot of bosses (who live abroad) for another lot (who live locally). Whenever such movements come to power they soon reveal their true nature - and the working class finds it has shed its blood for nothing.

Sometimes however, groups of this sort don't wait till they come to power before the "freedom fighter" mask slips: the killings of workers and peasants in Peru by the "Shining Path" rival those of the Peruvian Government; the starving populations in the southern Sudan have little reason to choose between the "Sudanese People's Liberation Army" and the Sudanese Government; and the ANC's torture camps for the disciplining of its own members are now well known.

That such capitalist gangs (which all nationalist groups are) should pretend to be "revolutionary" is not surprising - it serves their aims well. But we've also got to contend with all manner of left wing groups (Trotskyists, Maoists etc) telling us the same thing.

An outrage like the one in Warrington thus brings with it, in addition to the murderous act itself, several different levels of hypocrisy: the lies of the perpetrators about fighting for "liberation"; the expressions of moral indignation by the British government and the pro-government press (terrorists in power criticising terrorists in opposition); and the bleating of so-called "socialists" about how the working class simply must support such anti-working class scum and their "just" struggle (whether "critically" or not).

SUBVERSION and similar organisations have always argued against the lies of "national liberation movements" and fake-socialists (the "Left" for short) and every other organisation or institution that pretends to be pro-working class. But for anyone who hasn't been convinced by our arguments, just ask yourself one question - what could there be in common between the need of the working class to put an end to oppression and exploitation and create a truly free, world human community on the one hand, and on the other the aims of people who are content to bomb the workers of Manchester, Warrington or anywhere else, and the "Socialists" who support them.

GLOSSARY OF LEFT-SPEAK

Freedom Fighter = Capitalist-In-Waiting

Right of Nations to Self-Determination = Right of Capitalists to Exploit Workers

Fighting against Imperialism = Fighting for "our" Capitalists against Foreign Ones

Socialists giving Critical Support to Nationalists = Hypocritical Tossers

Nationalism and Imperialism in Ireland - The Myths Exploded. A pamphlet by Subversion. 50p including p&p

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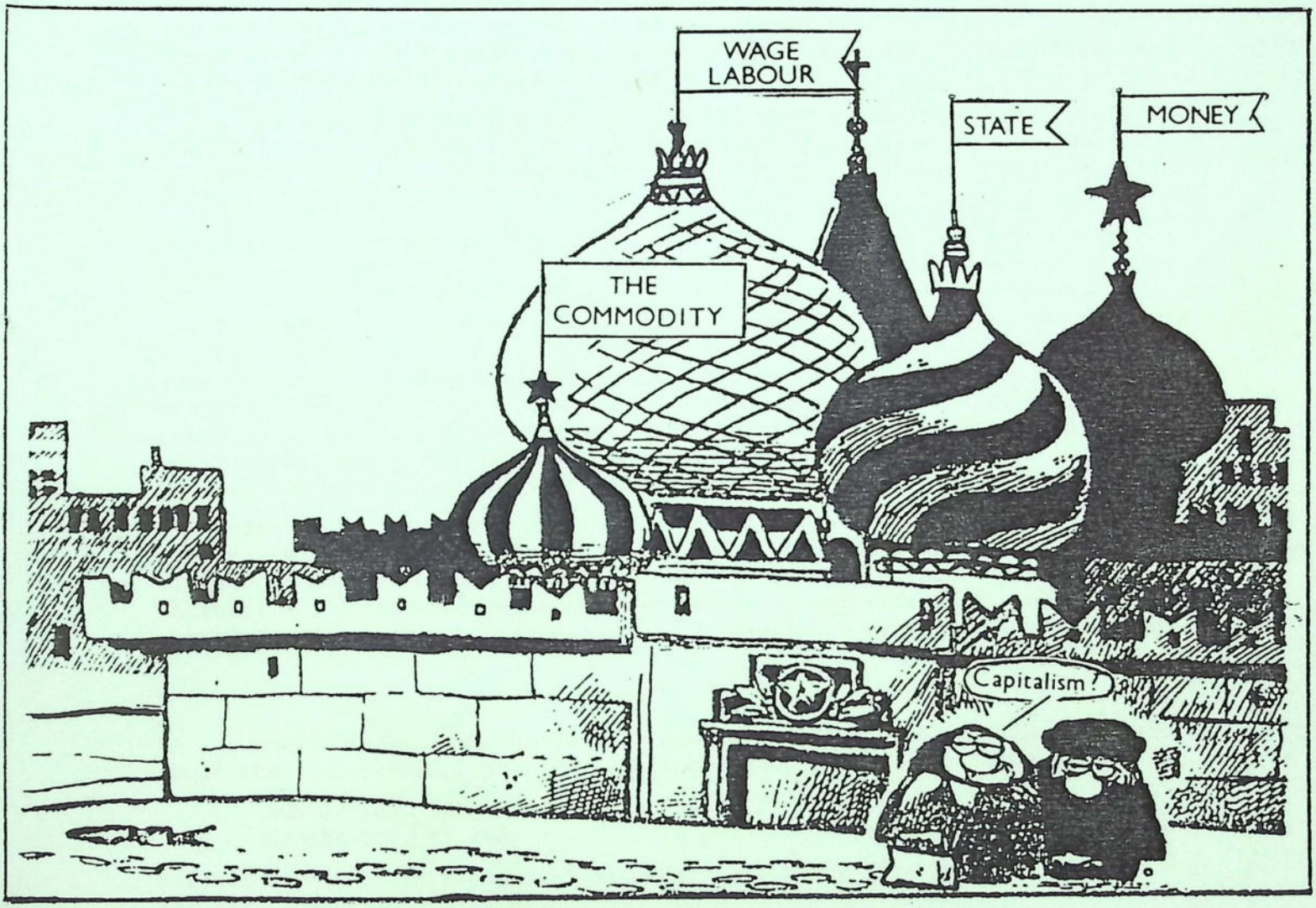
SUBVERSION

DISCUSSION PAPER No1



Capitalism and class struggle in the USSR

25p

DEK

PREFACE

This short pamphlet forms the introduction to a series we are publishing in preparation for a conference in the spring of 1989. The main theme of the conference will be:-

> "The Importance of the Market and Bureaucracy for Capitalism and its Enemies"

Each pamphlet will look at a particular country (viz. the USSR, Japan and Britain) to examine in detail the way in which market mechanisms and bureaucratic control interact with each other and relate to the development of the economy and the class struggle.

As well as contributing something to our understanding of the specific nature of capitalism in the countries considered, we hope to draw out some underlying common factors that will assist us in the struggle against world capitalism.

This pamphlet was written to help us understand the background to the rapid changes underway in the USSR. A further pamphlet by the same author will deal with the changing forms of working class struggle in Russia and the USSR since 1917. Examples of what will be covered include: the struggle against labour discipline in the 1930s; the post-war concentration camp revolts; the workers' insurrection in Novocherkassk in 1962; and the long history of strikes and riots which have afflicted every 'Soviet' leader from Lenin to Gorbachev. Attention will also be given to the non-explosive forms of struggle, the daily sabotage, absenteeism and go-slows at which the 'Soviet' working class are self-taught pastmasters.

Under Gorbachev political liberalisation and economic restructuring are leading to more 'modern'ways of disciplining and 'integrating' the working class. We are seeing not only the growth of religious, anti-semitic, national and democratic movements, but also, on our side of the class divide, a tendency for working class struggle to develop in new directions.

If you would like to be sent further pamphlets in this series and information about the conference please send a blank cheque or P.O. for £3·00 to:-

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Manchester, M1 2BU.

Further copies of this pamphlet are available price 50p (inc. p & p) from the same address.

WHY THE SOVIET[1] UNION IS CAPITALIST...AND ALWAYS HAS BEEN

For most of this century "revolution" in the West has usually been equated with the promise or danger of a move towards the social forms that predominate in the USSR, such as State ownership and the politicisation of much of civil society. Recently, in the late 1980s "the Gorbachev revolution" has become a common description of the present Soviet effort to bring the USSR's polity, economy and civil society into line with Western Europe, for example by publicising the State policies recommended by different political tendencies, by prioritising cash-based competition and by encouraging cultural pluralism. In other words, "revolution" in the USSR is painted as being equivalent to at least a partial Westernisation. So it is not surprising that the assertion that East and West are part of one world capitalist society leads directly to theoretical positions which conflict with a large number of generally accepted ideas.

A society divided into two parts, A and B, where all the governments and publicisable oppositions on both sides paint A and B as being mutual revolutionary opposites, is by its very nature totalitarian, because the totality of possibilities is presented as a subset of what already exists. But this and other ramifications of my analysis will not be discussed below. By defining capitalism in what I hope will seem a sensible fashion I shall simply demonstrate that it necessarily follows that the USSR is part of capitalist society. I shall conclude by outlining how such a perspective can shed light not only on the differences between the USSR and the West, but also on the major problems presently being faced by their respective rulers.

CAPITALISM

Commodity exchange

Wherever capitalism prevails, all wealth presents itself as an immense collection of commodities.

Commodities are objects which are bought, sold and compared with each other in quantitative terms. Purchase and sale presuppose not only private property, which itself rests on privative appropriation and the absence of concrete community, but also exchange, which is the foundation of economy. Economy corresponds to the measurement and organisation of human activity according to the quantitative interrelation of objects, i.e. by means of a very real abstraction.

The worth (or use-value) of an object is inseparable from its physical properties, the effort needed to produce it, and the needs and desires of specific human beings, and therefore cannot be quantitatively compared with other use-values. When objects become commodities, however, they confront each other in terms of their value in exchange, which is an abstraction from their use-values and can only refer to what they have in common, which is that they are products of human labour. Not concrete labour, which exists in various kinds which differ qualitatively from each other; just labour itself, labour time. The social character of labour therefore seems like an abstract characteristic stamped on products when they are exchanged among owners.

Wage-labour and proletariat

Commodities predated capitalism. So far I have said nothing about commodity exchange that does not equally apply to bygone societies based on barter, or where commodity production was limited to craft workshops or the luxury goods sector. According to my definition, capitalism was established whenever commodity logic crossed its final historical barrier by taking over production. Things are not only sold, they are produced to be sold, for a profit.

The development of capitalist production implied the spread of monetary economy, which was a means for the quantification and reinvestment of profits. And it relied on the expansion of a class of men and women who own no productive assets apart from their creative capacity (their ability to work). Most of them are consequently forced to sell this capacity, market conditions permitting, in order to be able to buy back the conditions of their own survival. The ability to create, produce and enjoy productive adventure is crushed and smashed into an abstract common denominator by being sold in return for survival.

The flip-side of this is that experience is confined to an environment which itself is produced by alienated labour. So it is clear that alienated labour does not only define what happens within the workplace; it is the basis of a society where there are separations between specific productive activities, and between such activities and the rest of life, and where a class exists for whom life itself appears only as a means for survival. The end of this alienation, this absolute qualitative dispossession, would be the beginning of a world where enjoyment of the environment would no longer be separate from its conscious and pleasurable production and transformation, where the pleasure of one is inseparable from the pleasure of all. Without such a perspective, it is difficult to come to grips with the defining characteristics of capitalism, because the totalitarianism referred to above begins to take its toll in the mind of the unwary theoretician. This is the meaning of Marx's remark that "Criticism is not a passion of the head, but the head of passion."

The value cycle

Since all commodities are consumed or destroyed at the end of their cycle, we must look for the place where exchange-value is created if we wish to find the key to the society's functioning. This can only be where labour is expended and exploited, where representations of exchange-value (cash, credit, bureaucratic privilege, etc.) are invested and where additional (surplus) value is accrued. The protagonist of this saga of exploitation, sale and reinvestment is exchange-value in motion, which is how we define the fundamental category of capitalist society, capital.

We need not spend too much time explaining who dominates this cycle of value. It is not the "Glorious Hard-Working Proletariat". Commodities are owned by their purchasers, and labour-power is no exception. Those who exploit labour-power, whose interests lie in the augmentation of surplus-value, are the men and women who personify capital, regardless of they way they reach and retain their social positions (through bureaucratic connections, family inheritance, clever dealing, entrepreneurial flair, impersonation or by any other means).[2]

Money

Capitalism is not just a system of production, but a cycle dependent on a social relation. Exchange-value doesn't only appear in the form of objects;

in order to be accumulable and investible, it also appears as money. Those who portray the USSR as non-capitalist would tell us that, since its managers and party officials cannot buy and sell enterprises and their products completely at will on the free market, cash doesn't play the same role as it does in the West. This is true, but what is forgotten is that cash is not the only form of money. After all, what is cash but that which can buy commodities? Dollar bills and rouble notes are simply vouchers giving permission to buy. They are a form of exchange-value whose currency depends on the extent of market freedom, which itself depends on the problems, composition, stability and international relations of each particular group of national rulers. The main point is that other forms of permission can and do fulfil the same role as cash.[3]

It is well known that bureaucratic privilage and connections (blat) in the USSR are central to the distribution of everything from industrial goods to shoes and cucumbers. Like cash, one's privilege and blat depend on one's position in the exchange economy. After all, two "tolkachi" cannot both buy a given batch of goods - the manager or party official in charge of the workers who produce the required batch (or the warehouse where it is stored) will want something in return for having it delivered to one tolkach and not another. The highest bidder will win.[4]

In the USSR bureaucratic competition and wrangling within the exchange economy is in no way restricted to the black or grey economy. No bureaucrat achieves position without cultivating contacts and performing favours for services rendered, without investing so as to be able to gain a return, or without fulfilling conditions such as membership of a well-connected family. Whether these exchange relations are legal, para-legal or illegal is irrelevant to our argument.

The old arguments over which economic indicators to use to measure economic performance in the USSR (parallel to the differences among Western economists over the relative importance of exchange-rates, inflation, government borrowing, and investment in research and training) are really about relating capital ownership (in Soviet terms, bureaucratic and managerial position) to optimal profitability, rather than allowing the telephone and patronage network to take on a logic of its own. "The circuit of capital proceeds normally only as long as its various phases pass into each other without delay."

The USSR: capitalist dictatorship and historical specificity

There is nothing in our definition of generalised commodity economy to imply that it depends on the formal bourgeois free market, nor on the inalienable and inheritable juridical right to private property. On the contrary, it depends on wage-labour and exchange. Only those duped by Soviet propaganda, or obsessed with legal formalities and non-essential details - such as the existence of a free market, or the generalised right of inheritance - could deny the existence of commodity economy in the USSR. And only deliberate falsifiers could deny the continued existence of wage-labour and the presence of proletarians ruled by those who personify the logic of the system that dispossesses them. In short, just as it is unwise to judge individuals by the opinion they have of themselves, so it is wrong to judge a class of rulers by the language of the laws it uses to justify its rule.[5]

The main historical specificity of the USSR is that the weakness of the private bourgeoisie at the beginning of the century, combined with capital's overriding need to destroy the working class revolution (in Russia and the Ukraine) ensured that capitalism was run not by individual bourgeois owners but by a party dictatorship which controlled "the bourgeois State minus the bourgeoisie" (as Lenin frankly admitted) from the moment of its coup d'etat in October 1917. Under Tsarism the State had played a major role in the

development of industrial capital; under the Bolsheviks this role was increased as foreign capital was nationalised and modern forms of economic discipline were introduced.[6]

The "East-West" continuum

A cursory glance at the ruling ideas in the USSR and the West will show us that, whereas the ideology of individual rights corresponds to bourgeois rule under an "ideal" free-market system, the ideology of indivisible collectivity corresponds to bureaucratic rule under an "ideal" State-run system. In practice, though, each national ruling class relies on a combination of both of these ideologies, and complex capitalist needs have their reflection in the relative extent to which individualism (human rights, market freedom, democracy, broader share ownership) and collectivism (Statist and para-Statist populism, "public" provision, plebiscites and parades) are encouraged within the framework of daily life. Furthermore, there are of course many "hybrid" forms of identity which bridge the gap between individualism and collectivism.

As in the realm of ideas, so it is in the economic sphere. There are several "Eastern" countries where State firms are extremely dependent on the free market, such as in Yugoslavia and China. Everywhere, the varying importance of cash in the money economy seems to be related to the modes of organisation and reproduction of the ruling classes, and it is clear that this observation can facilitate our understanding of the Gorbachev reforms. Secondly, considering such examples as Italy, Hungary, Japan and South Africa, as well as the "third world" countries, the position of each country on the bourgeois-bureaucratic scale seems also to be proportional to the size of each State's share of its national capital.

Nevertheless, whilst the planet should not be seen as divided into two absolutely distinct brands of capitalism, we should reach a better understanding of the whole if we concentrate our attentions on regions at either end of the scale.

CAPITAL'S THREE PROBLEMS, EAST AND WEST

Capitalism everywhere knows two primary laws: a "law of value" and a "law of command". The law of value is manifested by the need to maintain efficiency and competitiveness by encouraging investment in modern sectors and the sprucing up of lagging sectors, thus equalising profit-rates across the whole economy. In other words, this "law" tends to pull prices into rough correspondence with production costs. The law of command is the term I shall use to denote the need of specific ruling strata to keep a grip on political power, to maintain structure and order in the economy, to mobilise a non-revolutionary working class, and (whenever the free market mechanism proves inappropriate) to channel investment where the logic of capital has the most need for it.

According to our definition, however, capital is only one pole of capitalist society. The other pole is the dispossessed class. The individuals in this class, who are not all workers, do not only share the absolute qualitative dispossession of which I spoke above. They also share daily resistance to the imperatives of the society that dispossesses them, regardless of the extent to which they themselves reinforce it in acts and ideas. It is the absolute nature of their dispossession, combined with the worldwide social interconnectedness developed by capitalism, that provides them with the potential

to abolish alienation. Capital's most basic problem is not the operation of either of the two "laws", but the strength of the dispossessed. However well a regime has coped with the two "laws", manet sors tertia caedi. The third evil remains.

Objective laws can cause crises of regimes, management, organisation and structure, but a crisis endangering the existence of capital itself can only arise from the struggle of the class on whose dispossession it depends.

This is not to say that the interplay of the two "laws" outlined above does not depend on specific capitalist needs and structures as well as on the strength and type of working class resistance. For example, Stalin's "dash for growth", which prioritised capital's need to command over and above its need to establish a uniform profit-rate, was obviously conditioned both by the history of his party and by the history of capitalist management in the country. But, from the viewpoint of governmental and would-be governmental groups, to cope with the two "laws" is simultaneously to form a class policy for capital. Indeed one could redefine the "laws" in terms which make this explicit: capitalist rulers need not only to atomise the working class, but also to organise it.

To summarise, we can state that the universality of capital's twin needs for both generalised competition and structured order corresponds to an economic and social contradiction which afflicts capitalist society on a permanent basis and is not amenable to "hybrid" solutions. The more a regime tries to encourage economic organisational forms which comply with one of the two "laws", the more trouble it will experience with the operation of the other "law". This is in addition to the perennial problem of the existence of the dispossessed class, a class which capital cannot abolish (by definition). We shall illustrate this with two examples.

SOVIET BUREAUCRACY AND WESTERN BANKS: TWO PARALLEL CRISES

Stalinism and after

First we shall consider the USSR. Under Stalinism, not only were prices set administratively, but entire economic sectors (most notably heavy industry) were developed not on the basis of any particular accounting system or plan, but simply on the basis of a maximal mobilisation of resources. In one part of the economy slave labour replaced the labour of workers traditionally "free" to choose their bosses, and the labour market was restricted in various ways which affected almost everybody.

Most individual commodity prices did not in any way correspond to production costs plus an average rate of profit; they merely reflected bureaucratic relations among central and local officials. This was the extreme case of bureaucratic-administrative State capitalism. So did this mean that everything was produced "on command", that exchange-value production had been replaced by State despotism? Far from it! Each bureaucrat had his own capital to defend - not in the form of "inalienable" property, but in the form of partial control over particular productive forces, sometimes in the form of a formal directorship, sometimes in the form of a party secretaryship, but always mediated through Byzantine party and ministerial appparata and always policed by the OGPU/NKVD, which itself controlled vast productive assets.

What had virtually disappeared in most of the economy was "current" money, i.e. freely equivalent cash whose owners were free to decide what to spend it on. For the organisers of the economy, money (the abstract representation of exchange value) existed predominantly in the form of specific bureaucratic grants of permission for specific projects of accumulation or distribution. Each bureaucrat used his own (usually precarious) position, his specific powers and privileges, the information he was privy to, his connections and his blat,

to try to ensure that he was given easily fulfillable targets, special deliveries of raw materials, promotion and other "returns". Competition had in no way disappeared: private property and exchange cannot simultaneously exist without it.

One result of the system of administrative targetting and police terror was the most concentrated and terroristic phase of capital accumulation the world has ever seen. Another was enormous waste, structurally built into the bureaucratic set-up. The most obvious examples were and are the dismal quality of manufactured goods, and the enormous repair sector. Bottlenecks and shortages reached unprecedented levels. This was the law of value taking its toll.

The law of value is not a "law" which can be introduced or abolished by decree. Its effects can be gauged by the chaos which results whenever individual commodity prices vary too widely from "ideal" levels which would hypothetically be set by a free market where owners equalise profit-rates by moving their money around at will. Gorbachev is the most recent of a long line of reformists in East and Central Europe (as well as in some Western countries!) who want to restrict bureaucratic waste by making competition more fluid and more cash-based.

Some aspects of the Gorbachev reforms

Not only is Gorbachev beset by the law of value, he is also beset by Problem Three, the working class. He surely knows this, and is trying to cope in ways which are more far-reaching than Andropov's police raids on cinemas and bath-houses in search of absentee workers.

It will be worthwhile to take a look at unemployment in terms of our definitions. Unemployment means competition for jobs (among the involuntarily unemployed at least), and the absence of a high demand for labour-power. In countries where the demand for labour-power is relatively low, such as Yugoslavia, Peru, Brazil and Ethiopia, the unemployed are forced to beg, scavenge, migrate or starve. Generally they do compete for jobs, thus lowering wages and breathing oxygen into the economy, for which the welfare of the dispossessed is of course a mere cost. Often they are paid money by the State on condition that they are willing to work whenever their labour-power is required, but the rise of long-term unemployment in some countries is presently creating a "dependency" which governments are set on doing away with.

In the USSR, however, things are a bit different. Most workers spend the equivalent of several days per month being relatively unemployed inside their workplaces, where they are paid the normal wage as long as they work at an increased pace in the days preceding each month's plan fulfilment. Most observers of Gorbachev's reform plan agree that it will almost certainly involve the replacement of this state of affairs with the creation of formal mass unemployment, which for 55 years has been impossible in the USSR due to the extremely rushed nature of capital accumulation under Stalinism and because bureaucratic waste has over-stimulated local bosses' demand for labour-power.

This would amount to a major change in the way of coping with the "law of command". A freer labour market would partially replace the police and the "humiliation board" as a means of industrial discipline. This will be bound to produce a large-scale reaction by the workers under threat from it, i.e. most of them.

Strikes have increased in number in the USSR ever since Krushchev put an end to the huge camp system and was forced to rush supplies to Noverchassk in the wake of the 1962 uprising.[7] Nowadays, when individual forms of workers' resistance (such as absenteeism, sloppy work and drunkenness) are under attack as part of the rulers' assault on waste, collective forms of

resistance are likely to expand greatly, especially now that the Stalinist methods of discipline are hardly feasible for prolonged periods in this age of hi-tech and the parcellisation of industrial skills.[8]

The Western banking crisis

We have outlined above how Gorbachev's predecessors came into trouble by concentrating on the law of command and trying to ignore the law of value, and how Gorbachev hopes to cope with the resulting problems. Perspective on the USSR's place in world capitalism[9] should be enhanced if we take a brief look at the current Western banking crisis, where attempts to ease the operation of the law of value in neglect of the law of command are leading in the direction of a major crisis.

Modern multinational banking (and other forms of financing, such as "creative accounting" within multinational corporations) is based precisely on the free circulation of money. Billions of dollars, or the equivalent in other tradeable currencies, fill the coffers of the big banks. Money which isn't being invested in its owners' forms is almost always lent to banks or governments in order to "earn a return" for both parties. The result is that money capital is increasingly taking on a logic of its own. Eurodollars are lent to "unreliable" borrowers (e.g. in Latin America), and good money is poured after bad. In the US billions of dollars are printed in order to cover huge domestic arms purchases. These in turn require high interest rates which have led to an exchange-rate still high enough to have drastic effects on the US trade balance, even despite the plummet of the dollar against the yen and the deutschmark. Western European banks are left holding billions of dollars which they proceed to pour into black holes such as Peru and Venezuela.

This process leads to permanent crisis in many of the debtor countries, and to a precarious state of affairs best illustrated by the increasing lack of faith that original debts will actually be repaid. This is the law of command taking its toll.

CONCLUSION

Capital can be defined as a cycle of snowballing exchange-value nourished by the exploitation of wage-labour. It exists alternately as a "sum" of money and as a collection of commodities. Money exists not only in the form of cash, but also in the form of various types of permission and bureaucratic clout. Attempts to directly administer commodity production on the Stalinist model have the effect of whittling down the currency (i.e. fluidity) of money, thus precluding capitalist efficiency based on optimal pricing. But whenever systemic licence is given to the free flow of money, finance tends to obey its own logic, in neglect of the concrete long-term needs of specific capitalist units.

FOOTNOTES

(1) For the sake of readability I have refrained from using inverted commas around the word 'Soviet', a word which I use solely to denote the USSR. No connection is implied with the insurgent soviets of 1905 and 1917.

(2) According to our definition, capital need not be ruled by a class; the only class that need exist is the dispossessed class. However I choose to call the Soviet ruling group a class because it has always controlled its own reproduction.

The fact that it has only become hereditary since Stalin is irrelevant to this classification. I thus disagree with the views of Mary McAuley, Politics and the Soviet Union, Penguin, 1977, pp. 314-6.

(3) For excellent accounts of the nature of value and money, see Jean Barrot and Francois Martin, Eclipse and Re-emergence of the Communist Movement, Black and Red, Detroit, 1974 and Geoffrey Kay, The Economic Theory of the Working Class, Macmillan, 1979.

(4) In the USSR a tolkach (or "pusher") is a well-paid commercial agent who works full-time arranging purchases for an enterprise. Martin Weitzman, in his book The Share Economy, Harvard, 1984, compares the high status of Soviet tolkachi (purchasers) with that of Western salesmen. He explains that in the West price is usually higher than marginal cost, but in the USSR it is usually lower. An interesting perspective on scarcity! (pp. 36-7).

(5) The astute observer cannot fail to notice the way many Western analysts (of left and right) have uncritically adopted Soviet phrases which are in fact denials of the truth. (See Note 1 for a comment on the use of the word "Soviet"). Many are those who use such terms as "Marxist-Leninism" and who believe that Marx was in favour of a "socialist State", or that he believed that there could be a "transitional society" between capitalism and communism, or that he made any distinction between socialism and communism. See the first page of Geoffrey Hosking's Introduction to his A History of the Soviet Union, Fontana, 1985, where he implies that Soviet society is the result of the application of Marx's "doctrine".

(6) See Maurice Brinton, The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control, Black and Red, 1975, and Voline (Vsevolod Eichenbaum), The Unknown Revolution, Detroit/ Chicago, 1974, for accounts of the Bolshevik counterrevolution.

(7) See Hosking, op. cit., on how the crisis of the labour camp system was partly brought about by uprisings of the inmates (pp. 326-32).

(8) "When the task is simply carrying bricks from one point to another a policeman can ensure its successful completion. But no policeman can ensure that the wall of bricks is built straight, or that complex, specialised and interconnected industrial operations are carried out as they should be." (Hillel Ticktin, "Andropov: Disintegration and Discipline", in Critique 16, 1983).

(9) See Adam Buick and John Crump, State Capitalism: The Wages System Under New Management, Macmillan, 1986 for an analysis of some aspects of Soviet capitalism.

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SUBVERSION

DISCUSSION PAPER No2

THE STATE AND CAPITAL IN JAPAN

日本スタイル資本主義

75p

PREFACE

Since the First World War the bureaucratic state has played an increasing role in shaping the development of the capitalist economy and society as a whole at both national and bloc levels.

The most obvious expression of this has been the extension of the state's direct ownership and control of many areas of production. But more recently we have witnessed moves towards the disinvestment or 'privatisation' of state-owned concerns on a substantial scale. This process, far from being the ideological preserve of Thatcherite Tories, has been pursued with almost equal vigour by left-wing governments in places like France, Spain and Australia. It is parallelled by the relaxation of central state control over the 'micro-economy' and increasing 'market orientation' in China and the Eastern Bloc countries.

Some have suggested that this is the beginning of a reversal of the previously identified trend throughout the world towards 'state capitalism'. Others identify these moves as merely a short term reversal with the main trend likely to re-establish itself as the economic and social crisis deepens. Still others, recognising that it is still the state which is overseeing this whole process, have sought to re-define their whole theory of state capitalism.

It is not enough for revolutionaries to know that capitalism, private or state, is our enemy. The way in which capitalism seeks to change its shape in response to deepening economic crisis, increased competition, and potential or actual upsurges in the class struggle, is important in determining our interventions in the class struggle and our general propaganda against capitalist mystification.

What are the forces at work in modern capitalism which call forth the current changes in state policy? What are the changing relationships between the state bureaucracy and the traditional 'private' bourgeoisie? These are some of the questions which our series of discussion papers and the forthcoming conference in July will seek to answer.

The main theme of the conference will be: "The importance of the market and bureaucracy for capitalism and its enemies". The first short introductory paper explained the basis of the capitalist economy. It identified two primary laws: a "law of value" and a "law of command", in line with capital's twin but contradictory needs of "generalised competition" and "structured order". It went on to examine these basic concepts in relation to the modern-day USSR.

This second paper examines the same basic laws as they apply to the development of capitalism in Japan. It shows how the relationship of bureaucracy and the market has taken a particular form because of that country's specific pre-capitalist class formations and peculiar historical development. It also suggests that the current form may be a model for other capitalist countries.

If you would like further papers in this series and information about the conference please send a cheque or postal order for £2·00 (made payable to R. Knight) to: 'Subversion', Box W, c/o Raven Press, 75 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 2BU.

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CAPITALISM JAPANESE-STYLE

Capitalism in Japan exerts a fascination for many capitalists elsewhere. Its image is of robotised factories, electronic gadgetry, streamlined bureaucracy, and so on. Small wonder, then, that 'Japan watching' has become an industry in its own right, with an army of management consultants, business affairs experts and the like eager to suggest how capitalism generally can boost its profits by taking leaves out of the Japanese book. Needless to say, our aim in this pamphlet is somewhat different and it is useful at the outset to show how, despite the carefully packaged image of ultra-efficient capitalism, the roots of the modern Japanese economy and state extend back to the chaos and turmoil of the Japanese revolution of 1868. A discussant at an academic gathering in Oxford recently described the Japanese as the most unrevolutionary, order-loving and conformist people in the world, but this is a caricature that depends entirely on the type of historical amnesia for which academics are famous. The revolution of 1868 is for Japan what 1917 is for Russia or 1789 is for France. The course of Japan's capitalist development over the past 100 years is incomprehensible without reference to 1868, not least because the point at which the revolutionary pendulum finally came to rest in the years after 1868 decided the balance that would be struck between bureaucratic and market forces.

The Japanese Revolution

For a decade or more prior to 1868 opposition currents in Japan had been building up their strength in the provinces, particularly in the South and the West of the country. By 1868 they were strong enough to challenge the Tokugawa government and defeat the forces loyal to it in a civil war which lasted into 1869. The Japanese revolution was thus one of the great revolutions of history and was regarded as such throughout East Asia in the second half of the 19th century. In countries such as China and Korea, the Japanese were considered to be revolutionaries to their marrow, their reputation being similar to that enjoyed by the English during and after the civil war of 1642-9. Japan's aura of revolution was only lost subsequently when its new, post-revolutionary ruling class embarked on a process of imperialist expansion at the expense of other East Asian countries. Taiwan was Japan's first colony, acquired as a result of China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-5, and the building of the Japanese empire was given further momentum by the colonisation of Korea in 1910.

It was not only the eventual imperialist expansion of Japan that characterised the revolution of 1868 as a capitalist revolution. Quite apart from this external development, internally the revolution gave rise to all manner of changes to Japanese society. Power was concentrated in the hands of a bureaucratic centralised state, barriers to trade were removed, the hereditary hierarchy of samurai-peasants-artisans-merchants was swept away, and so on. Above all, impediments to capital accumulation and the extension of wage labour were ruthlessly eliminated.

Yet although the 1868 revolution was capitalist in its effects, it was not a bourgeois revolution. The class

which carried it out was not the bourgeoisie, nor was it inspired by an ideology of bourgeois liberalism. On the contrary, the revolutionaries of 1868 were mostly of samurai origin and the principal slogan they employed to gain support for the revolutionary cause was 'Revere the Emperor and expel the barbarians' (the 'barbarians' being the Western imperialist powers that were then putting increasing pressure on Japan). Although the revolutionaries were mainly of lower samurai stock, they still belonged to the same class as the leading figures of the Tokugawa regime against which they were struggling. They needed a symbol to legitimise their seizure of power and the figurehead of the Emperor served this purpose well. The revolutionary restructuring of Japanese society was thus carried out behind the facade of 'restoring power to the Emperor'.

After 1868 real power did not lie with the Emperor, however, but with a new leadership composed of young men from the lower strata of the samurai class who had no coherent policy for modernising Japan on a capitalist basis. Rather, since the samurai were traditionally a warrior class, it was military considerations that were uppermost in their minds. As they saw it, their principal task was to defend Japan's independent existence in the face of the threat of subordination to the Western imperialist powers. Hence, soon after 1868 the post-revolutionary priorities were formulated in the slogan 'Rich country; strong military'. 'Strong military' was self-explanatory; Japan had to acquire the means to defend itself militarily from the threat posed by the Western powers. But already by the second half of the 19th century, to be strong militarily meant not merely to have sizeable armed forces equipped with artillery and warships. It also meant having the industrial base to produce the military hardware. In other words, the 'rich country' half of the 'Rich country; strong military' equation acted as a code word for industrialisation.

Yet industrialisation involved far more than a series of technical operations, such as building factories, sinking mines and modernising shipyards. It also implied bringing about the social changes that accompany these technical operations - that is, of seeing to it that a class emerged at one pole of society that had undisputed control of the newly created capitalist enterprises, while at the other pole of society a different class took shape that had no alternative but to work for whatever wages it could find in the factories and offices. This was how it came about that the post-1868 leaders, despite the fact that it was far from being commitment to capitalism that had drawn them into the revolutionary struggle, found themselves, once in power, responsible for the rapid development of a capitalist state in Japan. An additional irony was that, despite their own samurai background, economic development ensured that they rapidly cut their links with the samurai class and even brought about its destruction. Although some capitalists in present-day Japan can boast of their samurai pedigree, the vast majority of samurai were soon reduced to destitution and became one of the elements from which the wage-earning class in Japan was forged.

State and Industry

Industrialisation took the form of the state establishing the nuclei of several basic heavy industries, such as shipbuilding and iron and steel, in the late 19th century and early 20th century. The state took this step because it recognised that, while there were strategic reasons why the development of such industries could not be delayed, there were no sources of private capital sufficient for the scale of investment required. Nevertheless, although the state took the initiative, this was not a policy of nationalisation. The industries were established out of state funds, with bureaucrats overseeing the building of factories, the importing of machinery, the recruiting of technical experts from abroad and the training of the initial workforce; yet once the new enterprises were in working order, it was official policy to transfer them into the hands of private entrepreneurs. Enterprises were sold at bargain prices to nascent capitalists, often on easy terms with extended repayment. Underpinning this policy of the state disposing of the industries it had established, there seems to have been a perception that enterprises would only flourish if they were exposed to market forces and forced to be competitive. Counterbalancing this view, however, was the realisation that Japan's fledgling industries could not compete on equal terms with well-established rivals in Western countries. Industries such as shipbuilding and iron and steel were of such importance to the Japanese state and its military ambitions that they could not be allowed to succumb to Western competition. The outcome was that, even after they were transferred to private owners, enterprises in strategic areas of the Japanese economy were assured of sustained support by state agencies. Support took many forms: generous subsidies, exceptionally low rates of taxation, government-funded research and development and, of course, disciplining of the workforce. With regard to the last of these, as soon as there were any signs of Japanese workers starting to organise to improve their wages and working conditions, the movement was suppressed under the provisions of the 'public peace police law' of 1900. The police were routinely employed to break up meetings and intimidate wage earners and, whenever they proved unable to suppress unrest, the government never hesitated to call out the army.

As far as heavy industry was concerned, then, the pattern of industrialisation was very different from the way in which countries such as Britain or the USA industrialised. In Britain and the USA the pace of industrialisation was not forced by the state, since the initiative remained with private entrepreneurs. As a consequence, private capitalist interests were fiercely independent and, while it goes without saying that they recognised the need for a state, they resisted any (by their standards) excessive intervention in their affairs by the state. This was never the case in Japan. In the heavy industrial sector, entrepreneurs owed their very existence to the state and their businesses prospered to the extent that company policies dovetailed with the expansionist ambitions of the state. A hand-in-glove relationship therefore developed between the major industrial concerns and the agencies of the state, with the former showing a readiness to accept 'administrative guidance' (as it is often called in Japan) from the

latter. The closeness of this relationship was continually reinforced by the material benefits it brought to both sides. The militaristic state needed the products of heavy industry to fight a succession of wars between 1894 and 1945, by means of which it carved out an empire in East Asia. From the point of view of the state (and particularly of the politically influential armed forces) industry was therefore a means to an end. Looked at from industry's point of view, however, war was good business. Each successful military campaign brought fresh markets and sources of raw materials under Japanese control. In addition, the loot derived from military victories was ploughed back into the Japanese economy and served as a valuable source of capital accumulation. For example, under the peace terms imposed on China at the end of the very first of Japan's modern wars (the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-5 that has already been referred to) China was forced to pay an indemnity of ¥366 million. This gave enormous impetus to the industrialisation process in Japan, with the number of factories in 1896 (the year after the war) being 2½ times greater than in 1893 (the year prior to the war). The advantages accruing to Japanese capital from repeated wars were not even nullified by military defeat in 1945. Despite the enormous destruction wreaked on Japanese cities by the intensive American bombing (including the atom bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) the four biggest industrial combines of the period (Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo and Yasuda) emerged from the war with total assets of more than ¥3000 million, compared to ¥875 million in 1930.

So far we have focused on Japanese heavy industry, but it should be mentioned that in the light industrial sector (mainly textiles) the state played a far more restricted role. Here entrepreneurs were mostly left to sink or swim as best they could in the choppy waters of the world markets and the state's hands-off policy in this sector contrasted so sharply with the support it gave to heavy industry that the resulting economic structure was often referred to as the 'dual economy'. More will be said about the 'dual economy' in relation to postwar Japan, but it should be noted that one of its consequences was a 'dual workforce'. In heavy industrial enterprises the workforce was predominantly male, relatively skilled and relatively stable. Although the wage rates of these workers in heavy industry were low by Western standards, they were above the prevailing average in Japan. On the other hand, in light industrial enterprises, such as the textile mills, the workforce was overwhelmingly female, unskilled and transient. Young peasant girls were brought from the villages to work for 2 or 3 year stretches under conditions that almost defy description. Their wage rates were derisory, their working conditions murderous and, during the few hours when they were not working, they were kept under lock and key in the company compounds to prevent them from running away. Divisions of this order within the wage-earning class represented a formidable obstacle to workers' solidarity and conferred a corresponding bonus on the capitalist class. It is hardly surprising therefore that, while the detailed workings of the dual economy/dual workforce system have been altered considerably since the early decades of industrial capitalism in Japan, the general approach of divide and rule has been assiduously maintained.

The Political System

Needless to say, capitalist development in Japan was achieved by means of pumping surplus out of peasants and wage earners and channelling this wealth into industrial and commercial investment. The full weight of the state was brought to bear on the peasants and wage earners to stifle any resistance, but the overall strategy of development was one which evoked a hostile response from other more 'influential' sectors of Japanese society. During the closing decades of the 19th century the Japanese government derived more than three-quarters of its revenue from the land tax and, although this burden ultimately fell on the peasants, the large landowners objected to the state's policy of favouring industry at the expense of agriculture. The rise of the centralised, bureaucratic state also meant that, as power became more concentrated, some of the revolutionaries of 1868 found themselves losing out in the scramble for positions and privileges. Those who held power were using autocratic means in order to propel Japan forward along the path of capitalist development, so not surprisingly, during the 1870s, the demand for 'democracy' became a powerful rallying cry among all sorts of critics of the regime, including landowners and disappointed samurai revolutionaries.

The state reacted to this challenge by buying time. It agreed to produce a written constitution which was to define the rights of the state and 'citizens' alike, but it argued that, in order to do this, its officials needed to study the constitutions of other 'advanced' countries. This process of ostentatious 'study' lasted until the Japanese constitution was eventually introduced in 1889, while all the time the state consolidated its position and pushed ahead with capitalist development. When the constitution was finally unveiled, amid great ballyhoo, it was couched in terms of the royal 'we' - that is, 'we', the Japanese Emperor, condescendingly granting various rights to 'his' people. Not only was the document liberally decked out with royal tinsel, but it provided for a political system which neutralised any challenge to the priorities which the state was pursuing.

According to the constitution, power lay with the Emperor. What this meant was that the real power-holders acted in the name of the Emperor. In reality, power was held by the military (whose commander-in-chief was the Emperor) and state officials (who claimed to be the 'servants of the Emperor'). 'Democracy' was supposedly catered for by the setting up of a national assembly, yet not only was the electorate initially restricted to 1 per cent of the population by linking voting rights to payment of high rates of tax, but the national assembly's powers were severely limited. Cabinets were not answerable to this body, but to the Emperor, who could appoint and dismiss ministers at will (in other words, at the will of his military and civilian advisers). Those political parties that succeeded in getting their candidates elected mainly represented landed interests (since most of those who had the vote were landowners) and, although they could create a lot of noise in the national assembly, it did not provide them with the means to obstruct the state's drive towards industrialisation.

Political and economic development brought about two important changes to this political system, even though there was no formal amendment to the Japanese constitution until it was replaced by an American-dictated document in 1946. The first of these changes was that big industry eventually claimed a share of power, along with the military and the state bureaucracy. The First World War was a turning point in Japan's capitalist development, in that the country went into the war with a majority of GNP accounted for by agriculture and emerged with industry representing the greater share. This meant that the state no longer had to protect industry from the 'democratic' demands made by the major political parties on behalf of landed interests. Industry was now perfectly capable of looking after itself, since its resources outstripped those of the landowners. The big industrial combines therefore used their wealth to take over the main political parties from the landowners.

The second change was that universal manhood suffrage was introduced in 1925 (women remained unenfranchised until after the Second World War). That the extension of suffrage had little to do with democracy is made clear by the fact that it was accompanied by a new 'peace preservation law' that gave the authorities draconian powers to suppress any movements they regarded as a threat. All the same, even the poorest male peasants and workers now had the vote and the main political parties reacted to this by developing networks of agents for gathering votes. The system worked best in the countryside where, because of the grip which the largest landowner would generally have on local affairs, he was in a position to 'deliver' the village vote. Money flowed into the main political parties from the big companies and was distributed by candidates for the national assembly to landlords and other agents, who traded votes in return. The tentacles of the system spread into the utmost villages, with money trickling down in one direction and votes being siphoned up in the other. It was this system that was laughably called 'democracy'.

Despite the fact that big industry took control of the political parties from the landowners during the 1920s (the landowners being reduced to a subsidiary role, as described above) the parties still operated out of a national assembly that had strictly limited powers. As a result, big industry did not rely solely on the political parties to represent its interests but developed links with other wielders of power - the military and the state bureaucracy. These links were both formal (an extensive network of committees where representatives of industry, the military and the bureaucracy regularly conferred) and informal (bribery of military and civilian officials by the large companies) and together they proved an effective means of harmonising the interests of militarists, bureaucrats and capitalists. So effective, in fact, that the political parties eventually became dispensable and were forcibly merged into the Imperial Rule Assistance Association in 1940.

The balance between bureaucratic and market forces within Japanese capitalism was well illustrated by the measures that were taken as Japan moved towards all-out war with the United States. Conscious of the weakness of Japanese capital relative to the American giant, the military wished to impose strict government controls on the economy in line with a comprehensive economic plan. The major industries were arranged

into cartels, with the leaders of the large companies at their head, and a Cabinet Planning Board was established. Control associations were set up to oversee each branch of the economy, but far from this representing bureaucratic domination over market forces, it was significant that the heads of the cartels gained the highest posts in the control associations. A general economic plan was indeed drawn up by the Cabinet Planning Board and handed down to the control associations for implementation, but competition for limited resources between rival control associations, and between rival capitalist interests even within the same association, was never eliminated. The control associations were thus, at one and the same time, both instruments of bureaucratic control and arenas for economic competition.

Japan lost the war with the United States, but both Japan's capitalist class and its state bureaucracy survived largely unscathed. As Japanese capitalism rose phoenix-like from the ashes of the Second World War, a balance was again struck between bureaucratic and market forces for the purpose of outperforming economic rivals within world capitalism.

The American Occupation

Following its defeat in 1945, Japan was under American occupation until 1952. The USA's foremost intention was to prevent Japan from ever again threatening American interests and its initial policies towards its defeated foe have been summarised as demilitarisation, democratisation and deindustrialisation. Demilitarisation involved disbanding Japan's armed forces and inserting into the 1946 constitution an article which reads:

> the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.
> In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

The military were thus eliminated as one of the wielders of power in the Japanese state and many of the leading members of the prewar political parties were purged because of their involvement in Japan's former military expansion. 'Democratisation' took the form of extending citizens' rights and turning the national assembly into the apparent hub of political activity. In practice, this meant that the national assembly came to fulfil much the same role as the Emperor had done in prewar Japan. As with the Emperor, the national assembly became the most important symbol of political legitimisation. Decisions were taken in its name, and people's attention was deflected by its antics, but real power resided elsewhere. As for deindustrialisation, this entailed a plan to break up the giant economic conglomerates that had cooperated with the Japanese military and had reaped vast profits from the war. In the early postwar years Japan became largely a closed economy, isolated from the world markets, with approximately 50 per cent of the workforce engaged in agriculture.

Although the USA had utterly defeated Japan and was in a position to dictate whatever terms it like to its former enemy, it lacked the personnel to rule Japan directly. Few

Americans had any knowledge of Japanese language or culture, and most of those who did were descendants of Japanese immigrants who, despite their American citizenship, had been rounded up en masse and interned in camps as 'enemy aliens' during the war. The American occupiers thus had to rule Japan by means of some element within Japanese society and there were few suitable candidates other than the bureaucracy. The Japanese bureaucracy was barely touched by the otherwise widespread purges which the Americans enforced; it saw its principal rivals in the struggle for power (the military and big industry) either eliminated or under threat; and it also had at its disposal a range of sweeping economic controls, which the USA decreed so as to be able to restructure the Japanese economy as it saw fit. The bureaucracy thus emerged from the occupation with its power greatly enhanced.

Although the USA was far and away the most powerful nation-state in the years following the Second World War, developments within world capitalism still managed to frustrate some of its ambitions, particularly in East Asia. At the end of the Second World War, the intention was to weaken Japan permanently and to groom China under Chiang Kai-shek for the role of the USA's principal ally in the Far East. By 1949 Mao Zedong's forces had upset American plans by carrying out a state-capitalist revolution in China and the following year the Korean War broke out. America found itself involved in a major war in East Asia, which it could not sustain if its supply lines extended across the Pacific to the USA. Where else could the USA turn for the supplies it needed to service its war machine other than to Japan? Yesterday's enemy was suddenly discovered to be a 'democratic' ally, plans to dismantle the economic conglomerates, such as Mitsubishi and Mitsui, were laid aside and, whatever the American-dictated constitution might say, the USA started to urge Japan to rearm. Consequently, the Korean War gave an enormous boost to the Japanese economy, exports were encouraged once more and market forces reasserted themselves so as to complement bureaucratic economic controls.

Bureaucracy and the Market in Tandem

From the 1950s until the onset of the world economic crisis in the 1970s, the Japanese economy grew spectacularly. In 1955 Japan's GNP was less than half the size of Britain's GNP but, between 1955 and 1973, the economy grew on average by more than 10 per cent each year. Yet although in 1965 Japan's GNP was about to outstrip Britain's, it was still only 12 per cent of the USA's GNP. In recent years Japan's annual growth rate has been reduced to around 4 per cent, but it has still economically outperformed most other industrialised countries, including the USA and Russia. This resulted in Japan's GNP in 1986 being 47 per cent of the USA's GNP and 89 per cent of Russia's GNP. The most recent predictions issued by the Japanese Economic Planning Agency are that, by the year 2000, Japan's GNP will be 60 per cent of the USA's GNP and 19 per cent bigger than Russia's GNP.

Part of the reason for Japan's economic success relative to its major rivals, such as the USA and Russia, lies in its rulers' skilful combination of planning and the market. Compared to Russia, Japan has an economy that is far more open

to market forces. There is intense economic competition on both the domestic and external markets between giant companies such as Mitsubishi, Mitsui and Sumitomo and this provides a continual stimulus for innovation, as each company seeks to gain an advantage over its competitors. In other words, the stifling of economic initiative that occurs in state-capitalist countries due to centralised economic controls is largely avoided in Japan. On the other hand, the Japanese economy is much more the product of long-term, strategic planning than is the case in the USA and other 'Western' countries. A number of government agencies, of which the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) happens to be the best known, play a major economic role by exerting 'administrative guidance' so as to be permanently restructuring the Japanese economy in anticipation of, or in response to, trends within world capitalism. In view of the fact that they are independent capital units and also economic giants in their own right, it is not surprising that there have been cases of major Japanese companies resisting such 'administrative guidance' or following it only reluctantly and under the threat of the state applying sanctions. Nevertheless, although such cases have occurred, there are many reasons why they are the exception rather than the norm. As we have seen, the way in which heavy industry was developed in Japan following the 1868 revolution has predisposed the major companies to cooperate closely with the state. Also, the more recent historical experiences of Japanese capitalism provided the state bureaucracy with the means to impose its economic priorities whenever this became necessary.

Until the economic crisis of the 1970s, Japan's economic growth was buoyed up by exports. It is true that Japan exports a much smaller proportion of GDP than do many West European countries (13 per cent, compared to 22 per cent in Britain's case, for example) but Japanese companies still captured important shares of the world markets with a succession of products. Japan's economic successes came in waves. Whereas textiles had been the major export in prewar days, ships and steel led Japan's resurgence in the 1960s. These were superseded in turn by electrical consumer goods and motor cars, while currently it is electronic and other machinery which is at the cutting edge of Japan's export drive. This changing pattern of exports reflects shifts that have occurred within the Japanese economy as a whole. It is not that shipbuilding and steel production, or even textiles, have disappeared but that their relative importance has declined as a succession of other industries have moved to centre stage. A major reason for the success of Japanese companies on the world markets has been that their competitive efforts have been underpinned by the anticipatory structural planning of the national economy carried out by the bureaucratic agencies of the state.

When one talks about economic 'planning' in a Japanese context, one is referring to something different from the type of economic 'planning' that has traditionally been practised in state-capitalist countries, such as Russia. In countries like Russia what the planners traditionally aim to do (what they achieve in reality is a different matter) is to engage in micro-economic planning by setting annual input/output targets for all enterprises under state control. By way of

contrast, in Japan the planning is macro-economic and more long-term. No government agency in Japan would dream of issuing precise instructions to private companies as to what to produce, from where they should obtain their raw materials and to whom they should sell. Japanese companies, large or small, make these decisions mostly on their own initiative and in response to their over-riding concern, which is to read the market correctly so as to be able to sell their commodities at a profit. It is true that, in this respect too, the institutional arrangements of Japanese-style capitalism are somewhat different from those that exist in most West European or North American countries. Whereas companies in these latter countries mostly raise their capital on the stock exchanges, Japanese companies tend to turn to the major banks for the bulk of their capital requirements. Given their enormous resources, the banks are generally prepared to take a longer-term, more strategic view of profit acquisition than shareholders, who tend to expect an immediate return on their investments. Undoubtedly, this relatively greater reliance on banking capital as opposed to equity capital has often given Japanese companies an advantage over their 'Western' rivals, since it has allowed them initially to concentrate their export efforts on capturing a share of the market, even at the expense of short-term profits. Once the market has been penetrated and rival producers have been weakened, however, Japanese companies have then naturally concentrated on what has been all along their (and their bankers') chief preoccupation - making profits. Even in this regard, the role of the state has been important, since the vital support given to Japanese companies by the commercial banks has been buttressed by the policies adopted by the official Bank of Japan. Nevertheless, Japanese companies have never been allowed to lose sight of the fact that their survival depends on their own efforts to realise profits by outselling competitors. They are constantly subjected to the discipline of the markets and, unlike the situation in the 'planned economies' of state capitalism, each company, as an independent capital unit, is responsible for its own economic viability. Japanese-style 'planning' emphatically does not entail the state writing off losses, bailing out under-performers or allowing some industries to operate with permanent deficits.

Two key features of Japanese-style 'planning' are research and development of new commodities in anticipation of future trends in the world economy (or, indeed, in order to fashion such trends) and the rationalisation of industries where Japanese capital can no longer effectively compete. As far as research and development (R&D) is concerned, the secret of Japan's relative economic success does not lie in huge sums of money provided by the state. Government expenditure on R&D is a mere 0.58 per cent of GNP, a lower figure than in all Japan's major rivals (in the USA, for example, state-funded R&D accounts for 1.27 per cent of GNP). Nor can the rise of Japan as an economic superpower be attributed to a vast army of bureaucrats plotting commercial campaigns with military precision. The Japanese state is relatively lean and even agencies as important as the Ministry of International Trade and Industry have a staff that is only a few thousand strong, which makes it a pigmy compared to the giant bureaucratic apparatus at the disposal of many a ministry in state-capitalist countries. Rather, where the Japanese bureaucracy scores is in the calibre of its personnel, its relative freedom of action,

the means at its disposal for implementing its decisions and the readiness of private enterprise to follow its lead. A career in the Japanese bureaucracy offers prestige, power, financial rewards and is frequently even a stepping stone towards a second career (after retirement as a top bureaucrat) as a politician or on the payroll of a private company. Small wonder, then, that the bureaucracy regularly attracts some of the cleverest men (and a few women) of each generation. Once in positions of power, both for historical and institutional reasons, there are few 'democratic' constraints acting on these bureaucrats. To give just a couple of examples, Japanese laws are notoriously loosely worded and many of the controls in force take the form of administrative ordinances which are never even formally submitted to the national assembly, thus providing bureaucrats with considerable latitude in their actions. During the years of Japan's 'economic miracle', the Japanese bureaucracy was equipped with a whole range of controls (some dating back to the American occupation, some of later vintage) for enforcing its decisions and for whipping recalcitrant companies into line. Resort to such coercive measures was exceptional, however, since most major companies were accustomed to see their interests as coinciding with the strategic plans of the state bureaucracy, plans which the bureaucrats drew up in consultation with the leading capitalists anyway.

It may be useful to illustrate these general points with a concrete example. Two of the problems currently exercising capitalist minds throughout the world are energy conservation and pollution control. There are enormous profits to be made by marketing a motor car engine that meets these requirements. Hence the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) has taken the initiative to organise a consortium to develop a ceramic gas turbine engine. Six petroleum companies, three motor car manufacturers, two ceramics firms and the motor car industry's Japan Automobile Research Institute have jointly established a research institute devoted to this project and aim to develop an engine by 1996 at a cost of ¥7 billion. MITI's role has been to anticipate the market for a ceramic gas turbine engine and to intervene so as to encourage commercial rivals to sink their differences in order to mount a R&D effort which would be beyond the capability of any one of them individually. This is a perfect example of what has often been referred to as the 'plan-oriented market economy system'.

As for the rationalisation of industries where Japanese capital can no longer effectively compete, the state bureaucracy's role here has not been to subsidise ailing sectors of the economy so as to protect them from world market forces. Rather, the agencies of the state attempt to read the signs of the market and to anticipate where the tide is about to turn against Japanese companies. In various sectors of the economy Japanese companies can no longer market certain lines of products at competitive prices, due to high overheads. The relatively high cost of labour power in Japan is significant here, with hourly wage rates in manufacturing being 25 per cent higher than in Britain. The wages gap is even greater in the case of competitors on Japan's doorstep, such as South Korea and Taiwan. It is small wonder, then, that nowadays in the case of a number of products that were once synonymous

with the Japanese export drive (calculators, black and white televisions, radio cassettes, 35 mm cameras) around 50 per cent of even the Japanese home market for these commodities is accounted for by imports, mostly from Taiwan and South Korea. The state bureaucracy's anticipatory response to these developments has been to orchestrate an orderly retreat from areas where Japanese companies are about to lose their competitive edge and to encourage the switch of investment into ever more high-tech and automated/robotised sectors. Without the coordinating role played by state agencies and their authorisation of capacity-reducing cartels and similar arrangements, there would have been more capitalist casualties as rival companies fought life and death struggles for shares of diminishing markets. Instead, the major companies have not merely survived but continued to flourish and the pain of economic readjustment has been transferred to expendable smaller companies and, needless to say, to the working class. This has been achieved by an ongoing process of strategic planning that has catered for the collective self-interest of the giants of Japanese capitalism rather than allowing them, in a completely unsupervised fashion, to inflict excessive damage on one another in an unrefereed war for economic advantage.

Dual Economy/Dual Workforce

The economic role of the state is important not merely with regard to what it does but also in the sense of what it studiously refrains from doing. In other words, the non-actions of the state are at least as important as its actions when it comes to maintaining the dual economy and keeping the workforce divided.

The so-called dual economy is as structurally entrenched today as it was in earlier periods of Japan's capitalist development. In manufacturing, for example, 50 per cent of production is accounted for by large companies (employing more than 300 employees) and the other 50 per cent by small firms (employing less than 300 employees). The parity of these figures does not mean that large and small companies stand in an equal position, of course. The centreground of the Japanese economy is occupied by a relatively small number of giant conglomerates, each of which is surrounded by dozens, or even hundreds, of satellites in the form of small companies. The relationship between each conglomerate and its satellites is unambiguously that of patron to clients. The small firms rely on the giant company for R&D, financial backing and, above all, for a market for their products. Their vulnerability means that they are largely unable to resist the conditions imposed on them by the large company. The 'just-in-time' delivery system (which avoids the large company having to maintain wasteful stocks) is just one example of the way in which the relationship between large and small companies is a lop-sided one, conferring disproportionate advantages on the large company. Small companies are disadvantaged even in periods of economic upsurge, but it is mainly when the economy turns down that the full benefits of the dual economy are felt by the major companies. At such times the giant companies are shielded from the full impact of difficult market conditions by the buffering effect of the small companies.

It is long-standing state policy to allow the smaller companies to take the full impact of the economic ill effects of a slump, while the major companies protect themselves at the expense of their parts-suppliers, sub-contractors, and so on.

As noted earlier, a dual economy necessarily implies a dual workforce. Those workers on the permanent payroll of giant companies are a highly-skilled, overwhelmingly male, 'aristocracy of labour' who, in return for total devotion to their employers, are virtually guaranteed full employment and relatively high wages. Probably less than 30 per cent of the total Japanese workforce belongs to this 'aristocracy of labour', but it is this minority whose conditions are generally portrayed abroad as though they are typical of all wage earners in Japan. In addition to relatively high wages and virtually guaranteed employment, workers on the permanent payroll of the giant companies also receive extensive welfare benefits (housing, education, hospital treatment, pensions) for themselves and their families. This is where the state's role in deliberately neglecting to provide general welfare is crucially important. Company welfare schemes are one of the principal means by which giant companies maintain their grip on their workforce and impose on them standards of loyalty and subservience which are the envy of capitalists elsewhere and which are often described by the 'experts' as though they are genetic traits of the Japanese. Far from there being anything inherently Japanese about the readiness of such workers to kowtow to the company, state officials realise that, if general welfare provisions were substantially improved, one of the principal means by which the large companies bind their workforce to them would be removed. Since workers on the permanent payroll of large companies know that a clash with the company may result not merely in the sack but loss of pension, withdrawal of hospital facilities, their children being deprived of education, and so on, they are effectively hamstrung. The price paid for company welfare benefits is thus a high one and the system works admirably from the capitalist point of view precisely because more than 70 per cent of the workforce is excluded from anything like an adequate welfare system. Those working for smaller companies are disadvantaged in every way: wages are lower (often only 50 per cent of wage rates in the big companies), there is no guarantee of full employment, welfare provision is poor and working conditions can be little better than an insult. As a result, it is hardly surprising that many workers in this position would give their eye teeth to gain entry to the 'aristocracy of labour'. Hence the deprived condition of the majority serves to discipline the relatively privileged minority of workers.

It is worth mentioning that trade unions are virtually confined to the permanent workforce of the large companies and certain categories of state employees. The percentage of wage earners who are organised in trade unions is in long-term decline and now stands at a mere 28 per cent of the total workforce. In most large companies, the entire permanent workforce up to middle management level is organised in a single union and relations between union and management are typically collaborative. The union sees its members' wage levels and welfare benefits as depending on the company's

profitability and, although to maintain even a semblance of credibility the union may periodically go through the ritual of making 'demands' to the company, relations are overwhelmingly characterised by union accommodation to company priorities. It is hardly surprising therefore that, even among unpoliticised workers, unions are regarded with cynicism as representing sectional interests rather than the general well-being of the wage-earning class. For similar reasons, electoral support for the two social-democratic parties, which are organisationally linked to the trade union confederations, has been in long-term decline.

Japan: the Democracy That Isn't

It would not do to leave this account of Japanese capitalism without saying something about the spuriously 'democratic' veneer with which the bureaucratic-cum-market structure is overlaid. The rulers of postwar Japan take as much pride in proclaiming its democratic credentials as those in prewar days did when boasting about Japan's imperial trappings. What is striking, however, is that there is a remarkable similarity in the workings of the prewar 'Emperor system' and the postwar 'democratic system'.

Since its formation in 1955, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has always formed the government. As has frequently been pointed out, every element in the LDP's name is a lie. It is not liberal; it certainly is not democratic; and it is not even a cohesive party. As far as the last of these points is concerned, one gets closest to the real nature of the LDP by seeing it as a collection of political factions which are constantly vying for ascendancy, but which nevertheless maintain a degree of cooperation so as to enjoy a share of the power and the privileges which would be beyond their grasp if they acted separately. The last thing that distinguishes these factions from one another is ideology or political principles. Rather than being organised around certain policy goals, each faction is an entirely opportunistic grouping of politicians who follow their faction leader in return for the funds which he disburses. The faction leaders obtain their funds from the political contributions made by the major companies. Such funds are then distributed to individual politicians, who use this money for vote-buying purposes in a manner that essentially has not changed since prewar days.

It is this system of institutionalised vote-buying and corruption which has ensured that the LDP has won every election since 1955. Given the LDP's permanent majorities both on the floor of the national assembly and in its various policy committees, parliamentary debates and discussion are little more than a charade, since the outcome is never in doubt. The real arenas for argument and compromise between the different market-oriented and bureaucratic interest groups that administer Japanese capitalism are the internal committees of the ruling party itself, the government ministries and the extra-parliamentary government advisory committees. Rivalries between different political factions are a conspicuous feature of the bargaining process that is conducted in the party committees, but so too are conflicting business interests,

since every politician is beholden to capitalist paymasters of one type or another. Since the politicians know that they cannot govern without the cooperation of the civil service, there is also close consultation between party committees and the corresponding ministries and this liaison is facilitated by the personnel shifts from the bureaucracy into the LDP. In addition to company interests being articulated by the politicians whom they fund, company chairmen and presidents thickly populate the extra-parliamentary government advisory committees, which are a permanent feature of the Japanese system. For example, Ezoe Hiromasa of the Recruit Company, whose publicly disclosed bribery of politicians and civil servants is currently under scrutiny by the media, sat on four government advisory committees. The function of such committees is to make policy recommendations to the government, which are then translated into detailed legislation by the appropriate section of the civil service bureaucracy. In view of the fact that the civil service supplies the administrative and research staff for government advisory committees, and that the ministries play a key part too in providing information and technical advice to the LDP's committees, one can understand that the bureaucracy, in its turn, is well placed to defend its interests. Thus, in contrast to the claim of the 1946 constitution that 'sovereign power resides with the people', real power in postwar Japan can be seen to be exercised by a triumvirate made up of the leaders of the LDP, the major companies and the bureaucracy.

Conclusions

Little that we have written in this discussion paper can be said to describe features that are unique to Japan. All nation-states are undemocratic, incorporate corruption and minority rule, are based on class divisions, and manage their economies by means of both market forces and bureaucratic controls. The elements do not vary. It is just the particular mix of those elements that is unique to a particular nation-state at a particular historical juncture. If we compare Japan to other nation-states, the mix at which it has arrived has worked demonstrably well in recent decades and this allows us to draw a number of tentative conclusions:-

(1) For the foreseeable future (and it is in the nature of capitalism that we cannot foresee very far) the Japanese economy is likely to continue to outperform those of many rival nation-states.

(2) If (1) is the case, there are likely to be crumbs from capital's banquet available for placating sections of the working class in Japan, above all for the 'aristocracy of labour'. Where explosions of working class discontent do occur, they are likely to be among the 70 per cent of the workforce who lie outside the 'aristocracy of labour' and (since these two categories roughly coincide) beyond the pale of the trade unions.

(3) Also, if (1) is the case, Japan is likely to move into increasingly open confrontation with other powers. Already more than 40 per cent of Americans apparently believe that Japanese economic might is a greater threat to the USA than Russian military might. In a hostile

and protectionist world, Japan is bound to try to push ahead with its strategy of converting economic might into military muscle. The ideological wrappings for this strategy are likely to be nationalism and Emperorism.

(4) Faced with Japanese competition, other nation-states are likely to respond by increasingly adopting the 'Japanese' mix. Clearly, this is already under way in Britain and elsewhere, taking the form of single union deals, the trend towards a 'dual economy' structure, the downgrading of state welfare provisions, and so on. Wage earners outside Japan are in a better position to resist these moves than workers within Japan, simply because they are <u>moves</u> - changes to the status quo, rather than a continuation of practices to which they have grown accustomed. Where struggle against 'Japanese-style capitalism' does emerge, however, it presents wage earners with an opportunity to go beyond resistance to the 'Japanese style' and to mount instead an all-out attack on capitalism, irrespective of its style, mix or ideological trappings.

T/SOR/18/25

SUBVERSION

DISCUSSION PAPER No3

DECADENT CAPITALISM

35p

PREFACE

This is the third discussion paper produced by SUBVERSION in a series leading up to a conference in Manchester on the 1st July 1989

The paper contributed here by the Communist Bulletin Group (and also reproduced in the latest 'Communist Bulletin') seeks to provide an historical framework for the discussion, the main theme of which is: "the importance of the market and bureaucracy for capitalism and its enemies".

It also looks briefly at the recent experience of 'Keynesian' and 'Thatcherite' policies in Britain.

The first short introductory paper explained the basis of the capitalist economy. It identified two primary laws: a "law of value" and a "law of command", in line with Capital's twin but contradictory needs of "generalised competition" and "structured order".
It went on to examine these basic concepts in relation to the modern day USSR. This will be followed up with a paper on class struggle in the USSR available at or just before the conference date.

The second paper looked specifically at the relationship of bureaucracy and the market in Japan.

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CAPITALIST DECADENCE —A RESTATEMENT

The following article is written as a specific contribution to the Conference "The Market and Bureaucracy in Capitalism". At first glance it might seem that an exposition on the meaning of capitalist decadence was only of marginal relevance to the subject of the conference. However the **CBG** believes that there is a certain amount of confusion among participants. We are of the opinion that important as the questions of market and bureaucracy are, they can only be understood within a broad historical-political context ie. the decadence of capital. It seems that such an understanding does not underpin the political frameworks of elements participating in the conference. Additional to this there is the particular case of the **Communist Workers Organisation.** Over the past two years it has visibly panicked in the face of the so-called Thatcherite Revolution and in the process appears to have abandoned a central plank of the theory of capitalist decadence.

In the midst of the Russian Revolution Nikolai Bukharin and Evgenii Preobrazhensky wrote that:

> "We are thus confronted by two alternatives, and two only. There must either be complete disintegration, hell broth, further brutalisation and disorder, ABSOLUTE CHAOS, OR ELSE COMMUNISM."
>
> **(ABC of Communism 1919/20)**

These few words sum up not only the nature of the deadly struggle then being fought out but also the idea that at a a given moment the historical validity of capitalism evaporates to be replaced by that of Communism. In a phrase the capitalist mode of production ceases to be a progressive formation, it enters its decadence and communism becomes a real possibility. Undoubtedly debates on the nature of capitalist progress-decadence are generally strewn with theoretical concepts and structures. This however does not mean that they are simply of academic interest. Quite the contrary is true. The way in which revolutionaries in the past, and those of today, approached and answered the questions associated with the debates guided them in their revolutionary activities. Problems such as what is the meaning of national liberation, social democracy and state capitalism are resolved according to how one sees the historical development of the capitalist mode of production.

Marx and Progress.

It is not my intention to give a history lesson on the "idea of progress" and its obverse, decadence.(1) Suffice it to say that belief in the rise and fall of societies is one which is of great antiquity and crosses diverse cultures, stretching, for example, from Greek slave society through feudalism to Nineteenth Century industrial capitalism. My concern here is to sketch out some of the elements which were to be found in revolutionary philosophy, specifically that of Marxism. I choose the writings of Marx because his body of work is that which underpins our present day understanding of capitalist decadence. If it is thought by some that this smacks of genuflecting before The Master then so be it. Such a belief is born of a misapprehension of Marx and the contribution he made to revolutionary thought.

Marx, drawing upon both secular and christian philosophies, adopted and adapted notions of progress to analyse and explain the mechanics of social organisation. Marx's philosophical guide Hegel believed that the progress of world history was the "development of the idea of freedom" and to the extent that social organisation was rationally developed then so the goal of history would be achieved. For Marx this idealism of Hegel was wrongheaded (but not the structure). In the marxian mode progressive development was posited upon the movement of material forces ie. social and economic organisation. Just as Hegel believed that there was a goal in history so also did Marx.(2) Using Hegelian terms he wrote of the goal thus:

> " Communism as the positive transcendence of formal property as human estrangement, and therefore as the real appropriation of the human essence by and for man . . Communism is the riddle of history solved, and it knows itself to be this solution."
>
> **(Econ. Phil. Manuscripts.)**

As Marx developed his historical materialism so he demonstrated that this revolution was to be achieved by the action of the working class for it was the carrier of the subjectivity necessary for solving the "riddle of history".

It's worth saying here that whilst Marx's historical materialism is a philosophy which logically demonstrates the necessity (not to be confused with inevitably) of capitalist crisis and socialism this in no way means that his work is cold, isolated, "scientific rationality". Marx had a moral sense which was outraged by the depravities of class society. He raged against the murderous consequences of the capitalist mode of production just as other Nineteenth Century socialists did. However, unlike those socialists who were content to remain at the general level of moral outrage, Marx stepped further and demonstrated that the

class system, specifically the capitalist mode of production, had a political and economic logic which gave the possibility of its dissolution and transcendence.

In **The German Ideology** Marx depicted the patterns of social change:

> " in the place of an earlier form of intercourse, which has become a fetter, a new one is put, corresponding to the more developed productive forces and, hence, to the advanced mode of the self-activity of individuals - a form which in its turn becomes a fetter and is then replaced by another. Since these conditions correspond at every stage to the simultaneous development of the productive forces, their history is at the same time the history of the evolving productive forces taken over by each new generation, and is, therefore, the history of the development of the forces of the individuals themselves."

Whilst Marx did not devote himself to systematically delineating the history of the progress of class formations it is undoubtedly true that his belief in a particular typological/stadial pattern to history underpins much of his writings. Basically he broke progressive class formations into four modes of production: Asiatic, Slavery, Feudalism and Capitalism. Just two examples of where this typology occurs. Firstly the **Communist Manifesto:**

> " the modern bourgeoisie is itself the product of a long course of development of a series of revolutions in the modes of production and of exchange."

And this bourgeoisie sprang from the "ruins of feudal society."; probably the best known example of Marx's (and perhaps his most schematic) is found in his **Preface to the Critique of Political Economy** where he notes that:

> " At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production ... Then begins an epoch of social revolution ... No social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed; and a new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself ... The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production."

In **Capital** Marx explores the mechanics of bourgeois production and in doing so pinpoints the elements which constitute its progressive nature and at the same time establish the basis for decadence. Capitalism is driven by the need to accumulate capital, is inherently competitive and is founded upon the exploitation of wage labour. The combination of these circumstances produces a particular social formation with its own particular problems.

Via the competitive mechanism capitalists are constantly forced to develop the productive process:

> " Hand in hand with this centralisation (a product of capitalist competition), or this expropriation of many capitalists by a few, develop, on an ever-extending scale, the co-operative form of the labour process, the conscious technical application of science, the methodological cultivation of the soil, the transformation of the instruments of labour into instruments of labour only usable in common, the economising of all means of production of combined socialised labour, the entanglement of all peoples in the net of the world-market, and with this, the international character of the capitalist regime."
>
> **(Capital Vol. 1)**

And:

> " Development of the productive forces of social labour is the historical task and justification of capital. This is just the way in which it unconsciously creates the material requirements of a higher mode of production."
>
> **(Capital Vol. 3)**

Working within this general abstraction Marx foresees the situation where the capitalist economy extends itself globally and manufactures a cooperative form of labour to the extent that it has at one and the same time created the objective basis for socialism as well as the class which will attack and destroy it. It is then that the progressive "tasks" of capitalism are completed; it is then that the system enters its dotage; it is then that socialism becomes a real possibility. Once again to quote Marx:

> " Thus the integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated."
>
> **(Capital Vol. 1)**

Much work has gone into showing how Marx's typological view is justified by historical events. It is no easy matter to map the general abstractions employed by Marx onto complex historical reality. But historical study has shown that a materialist approach which employs the theory of stadial social development has great validity. This is not to say that all Marx claims is demonstrably true: for example the so-called Asiatic mode of production is notoriously difficult to handle; one problem it seems to face, among others, is that unlike other modes of production it does not seem to have its own internal logic of rise and fall but is subject to decline through external forces. (3) But having said this the general approach is valid and is specifically so in the case of capitalism.

At another level Marx's idea of the progress and decadence of social formations seems to be problematic to the extent that it apparently commits revolutionaries to accept a political

paradox: on the one hand to call for the overthrow of capital and on the other to promote the moral degradations of capitalism. The very idea that capitalism was in any sense progressive seems to fly in the face of the reality of the brutal class reality of the system. How is it possible to describe the capitalist mode of production as progressive when, for example, it plunges both Indian and British weavers into penury, which ruthlessly exploits child labour and which in the middle of the Nineteenth Century condemned hundreds of thousands of urban workers to disease and early death? As I noted above the progressive nature of a system is defined by its socialisation of the labour process and the development of larger productive forces. This happened despite, or rather because of its ruthless exploitation. As Marx put it:

> " More than any other mode of production, it (capitalism) squandered human lives, or living bread, and not only blood and flesh, but also nerve and brain." **(Capital Vol. 3)**

But if this is the case does it not follow that in the progressive epoch of its development revolutionaries were bound to support the system and all its horrors? If one wills the end then surely one must will the means? Yes, but lets be clear about what this means. The end that revolutionaries desire is that of communism and the means to achieve this is the revolutionary working class. In other words, our concern is not with the development of capitalism per se but with the development and extension of a proletarian movement. The capitalist system develops as a result of its own exploitative and competitive logic. It is a system which is characterised by the inability of its bourgeois agents to penetrate its historical realities. This contrasts with the proletarian movement which, whilst it is an unintended consequence of the system, is constituted by its revolutionary consciousness. It follows from this that Nineteenth Century communists were not duty bound to support the ruthless exploitation of child labour in the textile industry despite the fact that this was a factor in the accumulation of capital. Rather it was to be there with the working class, to expose not only the specific inhumanities of the system but also the class goals which confront workers. In the concrete this meant building up the combativity of the working class, encouraging it to form trade unions and political parties. When Marx came out against the slave owning Confederate States in the Civil War he gave as his reasons:

> " every independent movement of the workers was paralysed so long as society disfigured part of the Republic. Labour cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded."

This is not a defence of capitalist wage labour over that of slave labour but rather an allying with the working class in the struggle against capitalism. Thus the dialectic of revolutionary commitment proceeds and thus the paradox is resolved: in supporting a necessary component of capitalism (the working class) communists ally themselves with the defeat of that society.(4)

It should be noted that the move from the realm of "necessity" (class society) to that of "freedom" (communism) is not guaranteed. Although the language of Marx's progressive philosophy speaks of inevitability and necessity it does not follow that the working class will in some pre-ordained manner achieve its historical goal. When Marx examined the struggles of 1848 he showed that he was aware of the extent to which historical circumstances delineated historical possibility. Marx concluded that given the relatively low level of development of French capitalism its working class was unable to attain the consciousness necessary to frontally assault capital with its revolutionary alternative. The working class, he wrote:

> " makes no theoretical inquiries into its own task. The French working class had not attained this level; it was still incapable of accomplishing its own revolution."
>
> **(The Class Struggles in France)**

DECADENCE AFTER MARX

Marx mapped the way forward. He lived and died in the period of capital's ascendancy, the time when it spread its tentacles to all parts of the globe and subjugated tens of millions of people. It was left to other revolutionaries to take up the tasks of describing and analysing the bourgeoisie's historical bankruptcy. A leading figure in this was Rosa Luxemburg.

Luxemburg, as early as 1898, a mere fifteen years after the death of Marx, discerned the real decay of the capitalist mode of production. In the anti-Bernstein text, known as **Reform or Revolution,** she pinpointed the conditions which indicated that the system was entering the era of historic crisis. In contesting Bernstein's view that capitalism was no longer subject to crisis Luxemburg was forced to look at the manifestations of capitalism in decline. Foremost amongst the indicators of this crisis was the emergence of imperialism, that is, the situation where national capitals fought both militarily and economically for given markets. For her the shrinking of available markets, the cartelisation of capital and the overall sharpening of international competition pointed to the decline:

> " When capitalist development has reached a certain level, the interests of the bourgeoisie, as a class, and the needs of economic

progress begin to clash even in the capitalist sense. We believe that this phase has already begun. It shows itself in two extremely important phenomena of contemporary social life: on the one hand the policy of tariff barriers, and on the other militarism."

Luxemburg believed that these conditions of decline "In the last analysis aggravates the anarchy of the capitalist world and expresses and ripens the internal contradictions." Luxemburg devoted a great deal of effort to analysing the specific nature of the historical-economic crisis of capitalism. Simply stated, she came to the conclusion that the fatal flaw in the capitalist system was its need for a market which was external to the capitalist mode of production. Given the finite nature of the global economy and the all-embracing need of capital to expand and extend capitalist relations inevitably a point is reached when markets are "saturated" and surplus value can no longer be realised:

" As it (capital) approaches the point where humanity only consists of capitalists and proletarians, further accumulation will become impossible."

(Anti-Critique)

Not surprisingly, in such a situation capitalism is torn by crisis as it fights over shrinking third markets. This leads to the point where:

" raids turn into a chain of economic and political catastrophes: world crises, wars, revolution."

(Anti-Critique)

And this imperialism was explicable and signified:

" the last chapter of its (capital) historic process of expansion: it is in the period of universally sharpened world competition between the capitalist states for the remaining non-capitalist areas on the earth."

(Anti-Critique)

Events validated Luxemburg's views. She saw the "Mass Strike" of 1905 as a sign of the historical maturity of the working class. She recognised that in the Russian proletariat's fight were the seeds of political emancipation insofar as a new way of organising political power was born. The construction of Soviets by the working class showed that there was an organisational and fighting form appropriate to the era of communist revolution. As the intensity of imperialist struggles grew so the threat of "World War" presented itself. When this broke out in 1914 it confirmed Luxemburg in her belief that the corruption of the system was there for all to see. Writing from prison in Germany and driven by her hatred of the system she described it as:

" Shamed, dishonoured, wading in blood and dripping with filth, thus capitalist society stands. Not as we usually see it, playing the roles of peace and righteousness, of order, of philosophy, of ethics - but as a roaring beast, as an orgy of anarchy, as a pestilential breath, devastating culture and humanity - so it appears in all its hideous nakedness."

(Junius Pamphlet)

The "beast" had killed before 1914 but the scope of its killing and the social-economic conjuncture was such that it signified that murder was all it was henceforth capable of. The necessity of socialism cried out:

" Our necessity receives its justification with the moment when the capitalist class ceases to be the bearer of historic progress, when it becomes a hindrance, a danger, to the future development of society. That capitalism has reached this stage at the present, world war has revealed."

(Junius Pamphlet)

Rosa Luxemburg was not the only one to view the movement of capital, the emergence of imperialism as an indication of the growing senility of capitalism. Nikolai Bukharin, starting from a different detailed economic analysis, came to a similar conclusion. For Bukharin imperialism was predicated upon the creation of a world economy. Working within orthodox marxist notions of competition and the inherent tendency for the organic composition of capital to change in such a way as to tend to reduce the rate of profit he concluded that:

" as the growth of productive forces within 'national' economy, on a capitalist basis, brought about the formation of national cartels and trusts, so the growth of productive forces within world capitalism makes the formation of international agreements between the various national capitalist groups, from the most elemental forms to the centralised form of an international trust, even more urgent."

(Imperialism and World Economy)

This internationalisation of of capital did not in any way abolish the anarchic nature of production. Indeed in the era of imperialism Bukharin said war, which was an "immanent law" within capitalism, was one of the "methods of capitalist competition" and that this competition:

" leads to the greatest convulsions and catastrophes, to the greatest waste of human energy, and most forcefully raises the problem of establishing new forms of social life."

(Imperialism and World Economy)

Like Luxemburg Bukharin recognised that war was inevitable under decadent capitalism: with the emergence of intra-national competition tendencies could only heighten. He wrote:

" Competition reaches the highest, the last conceivable state of development. It is now the

> competition of state capitalist trusts in the world market."(4)

It is significant that Luxemburg and Bukharin came to similar conclusions about the historical conjuncture. Despite very different detailed analyses of the dynamics of capitalist crisis they both agreed that there was no longer any justification for the continued existence of capitalism. The crisis and contradictions of the system had grown to the extent that no qualitative growth was henceforth possible: the world market had been created which in turn meant that capitalist production, whilst now incorporating 100% of the globe, had proceeded to the extent that that "co-operative" labour made global socialised production possible. Consequently, the global war first threatened and then practised by the bourgeoisie was in a sense 'parasitic' in that it was between existing economies and had nothing to do with establishing and extending capitalism. Only the bourgeoisie could gain from this situation. And it was a situation which was henceforward endemic. The outbreak of World War One signed the historic death knell of capitalism. In 1914 it did not suddenly become a decadent mode of production. Just as progress had been a process of development so also had been decadence, but much accelerated. Thus when Luxemburg analysed the struggle for dominance in Africa in the 1880s she saw that something was occurring which signified the emergence of a new period. The very rate at which the system fell towards global war was an indication of the forces of decadence at work ie. deepening and sharpening competition. This might be retarded by bourgeois economic or political mechanisms but it could not be stopped. The only thing which could stop it was the working class.

DECADENCE POST RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

When the forces of the Russian proletariat rallied against capital it looked as if the prognostications of Luxemburg and Bukharin were about to receive full validation - the decadent system, having engendered its own grave digger was about to be buried. In the event this did not happen. The working class was defeated and victorious capital tooled up for further wars.

But even the bourgeoisie recognised that with 1914-18 something had changed. Keynes wrote in 1919:

> " England is in a state of transition, and her economic problems are serious. We may be on the eve of great changes in her social and industrial structure . . . The forces of the 19th Century have run their course and are exhausted. The economic motives and ideals of a generation no longer satisfy us: we must find a new way and must suffer again the malaise and finally the pangs of a new industrial birth."
>
> **(Economic Consequences of the Peace)**

He was correct, the 19th Century forms were done, a new way was needed. But rather than being an "industrial birth" the way was to put the beast on to a life support system. That this has worked for seventy years does not invalidate the notion that capitalism is no longer decadent. We need only look at the structure of capitalism over the period to see that it is a system which can only supply misery.(5)

This is not to deny that the use values of capitalism have developed in seventy years or that commodity production has remained static. Far from it. Decadence is not defined by static or declining levels of production. The decadence of the system is established by the way in which the horrors it imposes upon mankind are capable of transcendence with the historically given levels of social productive capacity. Thus the imperialist conflagration, the recurring economic crises, the "natural" disasters which continue to ravage the world can be overcome, at least the objective conditions exist. (The problem of actual transcendence through revolutionary subjectivity is another problem) This is the essence of decadence.

POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

Beyond this decadence carries with it structural-political changes which impinge upon the organisation of revolutionary activity. Rosa Luxemburg was one of the first to become aware of the political implications of decadence.(6) Luxemburg recognised that in the new period liberal democracy was indefensible for the reason that the institutions of capitalism were inevitably associated with the needs of imperialism. as a consequence parliamentary bodies could only negotiate within the parameters of the needs of decadence and be part of the struggle between national capitals. Luxemburg wrote that these institutions had "completely exhausted their function as aids in the development of bourgeois society." Flowing from this same analysis she also

concluded that in the era of internationalisation of the capitalist market, struggles for national autonomy were meaningless for the very reason that imperialism tended to the situation where a few capitals were dominant and the rest became client-subject states:

> " So long as capitalist states exist ie. so long as imperialist world policies determine and regulate the inner and the outer life of the nation, there can be no "national self-determination" either in war or in peace."
>
> **(Reform or Revolution)**

And elsewhere she continued:

> " Today the nation is but a cloak that covers the imperialistic desires, a battle-cry for imperialistic rivalries, the last ideological measure with which the masses can be persuaded to play the role of cannon fodder in imperialistic wars."
>
> **(Junius)**

National Liberation struggles are only moments in larger imperialist struggles. Consequently there is now no way that such struggles can be supported by revolutionaries. Luxemburg's analysis on this was incisive but nonetheless was rejected by many revolutionaries who could not break from the opportunism so characteristic of the Second International.

It has been no easy matter for revolutionaries to defend these positions. On the one hand the "traditional" bourgeoisie has directly organised itself both ideologically and via its state organs of repression to ensure that the working class pays no heed to the lessons of decadence; but far more important, and more tragic, has been the opposition engendered within the proletarian movement itself. Foremost in this attack upon revolutionary clarity was Lenin in his infamous pamphlet **"Left-Wing Communism an Infantile Disorder"**. This work marks one of the lowest points in Lenin's revolutionary life and it and its consequences validate the positions of Luxemburg et alia. As a result of Lenin's temporising and his seeking to accommodate weaknesses within the Russian situation he effectively aided the bourgeoisie both at the time and subsequently. He armed the left of the bourgeoisie with an ideological structure which guided the class into supporting imperialist struggles.

But revolutionaries were not defeated. Through the 1920s and 1930s they continued to extend the political legacy of Luxemburg and others. The so-called Dutch, German and Italian Left Communists took up these tasks and developed a critique of the whole panoply of Social Democratic forces which were hostile to proletarian struggle. They highlighted the bourgeois components of these movements and argued for the importance of self-activity and consciousness in the working class.

Social Democracy was an outgrowth of working class activity. It represented a valid working class response in the era of progressive growth. Decadence changed this. Essentially Social Democracy, typified in Trade Union struggle, was founded upon the possibility of immediate reform of capitalism and the objective impossibility during that period of the working class imposing its historic solution of socialism upon capitalism. Class pressure could, and still does, influence and ameliorate some of the worst aspects of bourgeois society. The working class is a factor in determining the intensity and direction of exploitation. So if this remains true today as it was in the past, why is it no longer possible to support reformism?

In the Nineteenth Century revolutionaries could work within organisations with the "minimum" programme but at the same time advocate the fight for the "maximum". Today this is no longer possible. We live in a different historical conjuncture, that of decadence. As already noted the period of progressive growth was typified by the quantitative and qualitative expansion of the bourgeois mode of production. This entailed generating a "cooperative" global economy which provided the objective base for socialism.

In the era of progressive growth capitalist competition was generally typified by competition between individual units both within and among national boundaries. The imperatives of imperialism demanded new things of national capitals and institutions within them. Imperialism, as Bukharin and Luxemburg had perceived, was characterised by the emergence of the nation state as a constantly active agent in promoting its particular interests to the detriment of others leading to some form of coordinated economic competition reinforced by military might. This change had a profound impact upon reformism. Reformism, Social Democracy, was caught, trapped by its own premises and forced to become an agent of imperialist capitalism. Central to reformism is the necessity to accept compromise within the strictures of given moments of bourgeois production ie. to accept a modus vivendi with capitalism. But in accepting this working relationship reformist organisations necessarily fall into negotiating with the needs of imperialism for, in the final analysis, decadent capitalism is organised by the state for the needs of the imperialist state. Thus reformism becomes not only implicated in imperialism it becomes and remains central to defending decadent capitalism.

No clearer example of this is to be found than when a national capital is confronted by external economic-military threats. The carnage of WW1 and WW2 was in part ensured by the direct participation of trade unions and the rest of Social Democracy. What the Webbs called "the impulsive and unself-regarding patriotism" of the trade unions in 1914 was no accident, it was the logical product of a programme of political action which accepted that the health and welfare of trade unionism was intimately related to the well-being of the national capital. When war broke out Social Democracy rallied to the flag. This took some revolutionaries by surprise but with varying degrees of clarity a number of individuals and groups began to see that reformism was henceforth an unacceptable companion in political action. Writing in 1915 Herman Gorter noted that for trade unionism:

> " reform became everything. An improved standard of living the goal. Theory, the revolutionary theory went by the board. And with it the entire International. Such things became just noise and hollow words."
>
> **(The Origins of Nationalism in the Proletariat).**

And flowing from this commitment the goal of the "nation" was taken as the goal of the working class

> " Reform, the path to the goal is everything. Unite with the bourgeoisie too, with a section of it, then you too will obtain many more reforms."

In a similar vein Anton Pannekoek said that in decadence the trade union becomes:

> " legal, an open supporter of the state and recognised by the latter, it makes 'expansion of the economy before the revolution' its

slogan, in other words the maintenance of capitalism."

(World Revolution and Communist Tactics)

Since WW1 reformism has shown itself to be more than a willing friend of capital: an element of capitalism. At times trade unions are part of the formal state machine, at others they stand in opposition. Irrespective, however, of these apparently contradictory positions, the reality is that at all times they remain part of the imperialist structure, defending a particular programme which, even when it is not accepted by another section of the bourgeoisie, defends a very particular interest **within** a decadent structure.

At another level reformism in decadence is the antithesis of working class activity. By definition reformism demands that workers accept not only a political programme and the constraints of imperialism but also the organisational form which opposes and obstructs the development of self-consciousness in the working class. Pannekoek was clear in 1920 when he wrote that the trade union in decadence:

" democratic forms notwithstanding, the will of the members is unable to prevail against the bureaucracy; every revolt breaks on the carefully constructed apparatus of orders of business and statutes before it can shake the hierarchy."

(World Revolution)

Whilst some of Pannekoek's formulations on this aspect of reformism tends to make too much of a distinction between political programme and organisation, he was nonetheless correct in his claim that the reformist struggle, whether in Parliament or trade unions, was part of a form wholly antithetical to the course of the working class in the era of imperialism. The era of imperialism is the age of revolution and the only form of proletarian organisation is that which promotes the development of class consciousness. This is only possible in the self-activity of the class. Revolutionary self-consciousness comes from direct and immediate participation in class struggle. To date the historically discovered forms of struggle which expresses this need are the Councils and Soviets. In them consciousness has the greatest opportunity for developing. Pannekoek said of their need that:

" Revolution requires social reconstruction to be undertaken, difficult decisions made, the whole proletariat in creative action - and this is possible if first the proletariat then a greater and greater number take matters in hand themselves, know their own responsibilities, investigate, agitate, wrestle, strive, reflect, assess, seize chances and act upon them."

(World Revolution)

Its true that in the era of progressive capitalism the most dynamic moments of class struggle involved this self-activity and that this inevitably came up against the limits of reformism. There was certainly tension and conflict at these points and it was the duty of revolutionaries to agitate for active participation in struggles. This tension, whilst it could not be resolved, could be mitigated by the larger political-historical realities of the period ie. the context of developing capitalism. In decadence this uneasy relationship was finally broken, resolved. It is no longer possible to advocate active participation in organisational-political forms which are not those of the self-conscious proletariat.

STATE CAPITALISM

One of the features which highlights reformism's assimilation into the capitalist structure is the extent to which it is found in formal state structures. As already noted, in WW1 both German and British Social Democracy found their places in the sun, they were legitimated in the state structure. Subsequently their positions have ebbed and flowed with the shifting alliances and strategies of bourgeois factions within national capitals. For example German reformism was expelled from the state in 1933. After the heady days of Weimar, when it helped slaughter thousands of workers, reformism was put into opposition. More recently, and in a much less dramatic fashion, we have witnessed British Trade Unionism being pushed out into the cold by Thatcherism. Over the past ten years the Tory government has significantly eroded the effective strength of trade unionism and at the same time has reorganised the economic structure to the extent that it can now appear as if the "classic" form of decadence has been swept away. Thatcherism has not only marginalised the unions, it has also systematically de-nationalised important sectors of the economy. In doing this it seems as if that saviour of capitalism, nationalisation, that apparently essential form of decadence so typically promulgated by social democracy, is historically dead. Now this faces revolutionaries with a problem, especially those who tend towards the view that the degree of nationalisation in an economy is in direct proportion to the extent of state capitalism. One organisation which appears to hold this view is the **Communist Workers Organisation.** Thatcherism has forced the CWO towards rejecting the classic left communist position on decadence, imperialism and its formal structure commonly accepted to be state capitalism.

In **Workers Voice** 35, (June/July 1987) the **CWO** published an article entitled "Theses on Thatcherism". This "focus for discussion" was to be a guide for a "fuller understanding of the evolution of British capitalism in the 1980s, and its likely development into the 1990s". The **CWO** is an organisation which claims to stand by the idea that we live in the era of imperialism and that this is synonymous with the decadence of capital. Starting from such a position one could expect the **CWO** to be sharper on the nature of Thatcherism than it is. Indeed one would expect at least an attempt to apply the "classic" notion of decadence to the shifting complexities of the past ten years. Unfortunately rather than taking up the challenge the **CWO** has panicked. Like **Solidarity** over twenty years earlier the **CWO** has taken a short-term movement in capital as some sort of general refutation of the revolutionary position. Just as **Solidarity's** nerve failed with marxism in the context of Keynsianism in the period of reconstruction so also has the **CWO's** in the face of Thatcherism. This is not only a weakness of that particular organisation but one which threatens to undermine hard fought for gains of the past sixty years.

The basic argument behind **"Theses on Thatcherism"** is that the Thatcher government has taken a decision to cast off industrial production from its central concerns and to focus upon extending the service sector of the economy. This move, it is claimed, entailed the "reversal of the trend towards state capitalism" signifying that British capitalism has given up any "attempt to maintain its position on the world market as a specific national capital". Underpinning these conclusions are the beliefs that state capitalism is an organisational form of specific capitals rather than a general historical condition; and that gradations of strength within the world market are simply defined: those with what might be called "economic independence" are national capitals and those without are not (it seems a corollary of this is that the former are imperialist whilst the latter are not). Clearly, these positions go against the received notion that capitalist forms in decadence are not chosen or rejected at will by bourgeois governments but are forced upon them by large historical forces (always acknowledging that there are moments of contingency within general structures).

So what is state capitalism? It is the condition of capital in the era of imperialism; it is the necessary way in which capital organises itself in decadence; it is a form which expresses the way in which the economic and political imperatives of decadence play upon capitalism.

It is not nationalisation. If it were then Russia (to date) would be more state capitalist that France whilst the U.S.A. would hardly be state capitalist at all. In other words the most powerful nation in the world manifests least the phenomenon of decadence. Undoubtedly nationalisation is a factor in state capitalism as is-was the related policy of Keynsianism. It was no accident that Keynes developed his particular theory in the wake of proletarian revolution, global war and extending economic crisis. He was one of the sharpest bourgeois minds of the period aware as he was of the threat from the working class and the crisis nature of capitalism when left on its "natural" path. Keynes' solution was economic and political. He called on governments to institute a policy of demand management which on the one hand would alter the so-called natural equilibrium of capital and thus overcome the tendency to unemployment; on the other this would have the political consequence of managing the problem of the working class. Not surprisingly various bourgeoisies began to apply Keynsian policies in the 1930s. It was possible to use Keynsianism in both a nationalised and private mode. In Britain the Labour Party seized upon Keynes' ideas to justify "Clause Four" showing how "socialism" accorded with economic "common sense" and that it was natural for the state to not only guide the economy but indeed to nationalise it all the better to control and direct investment. In contrast with the way in which Keynsian policies involved extensive nationalisation in Britain is the example of the U.S.A. Roosevelt's New Deal was Keynsianism applied on a large scale. Demand management was successfully pursued without extensive nationalisation, indeed without any significant ideology of taking over the "commanding heights".

Keynsianism was a product of decadent capitalism; it was not decadence itself. For a moment it best expressed the ideological and political needs of state capitalism. The fact that it and its nationalised face was such a prominent feature of western capitalism for over forty years tended to lead revolutionaries into the trap of believing that these two elements were the essence of state capitalism. But they were not and are not.

The same can be said of the statified nature of Russian capitalism. This was the product of the defeat of the proletariat, the existence of a once revolutionary party at the head of the state and all this in the context of imperialism. The private bourgeoisie had been expelled from Russia and the logical organisational form which flowed from the socialist ideology of the Bolsheviks was that of statification. Similarly the statified way in which Third World countries have developed is explicable in terms of particular constituents and the general historical pressures.

The essence of state capitalism is found in the way the world economy has been parcelled among a few major capitalist powers which forces the state to intervene and direct economic and social life. As already noted imperialism was in part constituted by the growth of monopolies within national capitals and these were buttressed by the development of state organs appropriate to confronting the increasing competition. At the very heart of these state organs were armed forces. As decadence deepened the need for states to maintain, or at least attempt to maintain, military superiority grew. Generally military expenditure has tended to grow as a percentage of the G.N.P. of all bourgeois states. For example between 1913 and 1969 the proportion of G.N.P. devoted to arms by British capital almost doubled. The situation of that of the U.S.A. was more dramatic, in the space of just over thirty years (1938-69) it grew by a factor of six. In decadence the capitalist state has become a major customer, a consumer of weaponry. This in itself a sign of the bankruptcy of the system: the world economy shows less and less ability to produce items with human use-value, increasingly weapons of destruction take centre stage. Military spending is necessary for capital because at the end of the day imperialism satisfies itself in open warfare. Expenditure on arms is now inextricably part of the global economy, and these, as is all too obvious, are willingly used by the bourgeoisie to slaughter millions. For some nation states arms production can be highly profitable but globally it is a drain as it adds no new value to capital, it does not lead to expanded reproduction. This again is a sign of capital's decadence.

Dominance can be achieved by military might. Imperialism is a system of relations of dominance. This is not fixed for all time. Since the end of the First World War the hierarchy of the global economy has changed with the U.S.A. rising to the top and a variety of changes occurring through the lower ranks. However, irrespective of these changes, the basic character of imperialism remains the same. The CWO's belief that only the dominant economies are national capitals and by extension the view that only they are imperialist is refuted by the realities of the world. Firstly at what point of domination do we stop at? Given for example, the fact that over the past fifty years, US capitalism has been the major force in the world market, more powerful than the other western nations and also stronger than Russia, does this mean that only the U.S.A. is a national capital, only it is imperialist? Take another historical example, that of Britain. It was one of the victors of 1918 but far from this re-establishing British capital at the top of the capitalist tree the indebtedness brought on by the war pushed it towards becoming a client state of the U.S.A. But this did not mean it ceased either to strive for and on occasion achieve moments of dominance in the world market. British capitalism was fortunate to have the Empire which it forced itself upon. This undoubtedly gave British capital a breathing space and was undoubtedly imperialist but it's relative decline continued. The world market is made up of such levels of dominance. Big fleas, little fleas, but nevertheless all fleas and all pursuing their imperialist ends within a state capitalist framework.

If we once again take the example of the interwar period and the position of British capital we find features which typify how state capitalism functions and this in the context of a non-nationalised economy. The Exchange Equalisation Fund was set up in 1932 with the aim of controlling the value of sterling on the world market, helping to set up a "sterling bloc". This was a long way from Britain of the Gold standard and free-trading. The pressures of economic crisis and intensified economic competition forced the state to take over the management of currency in international competition (as far as was possible for in bourgeois economic relations total control is not possible). A further weapon in the state's armoury was the use of tariff policies which could, at least momentarily, protect sectors of the British economy. In agriculture and fisheries marketing boards were set up to control and direct local production as well as restrict imports. This of course was not the first time that the British state had controlled such imports (the Corn Laws being one of the better known examples of earlier restrictions) but it is the context of the control which gives it meaning and in the situation of decadence tariff control expresses state capitalist imperatives. The same can be said for the direct state intervention in industry. The recent controlled "restructuring" in mining and steel manufacture is nothing new. Similar policies were instituted in the 1930s. Not only did the British state restrict imports of industrial products it went so far as to encourage the British Iron and Steel confederation to push through a rationalisation of steel making. Companies were amalgamated and works were closed down and at the same time capital was concentrated into developing better integrated steel plants with the capacity to compete on the world market. The shipbuilding industry also underwent a policy of cutback and closing down under the immediate direction of the National Shipbuilders Security (a cartel of private capitalists) but with the approval of the state. By the mid 1930s the state decided that it was strategically important to begin subsidising shipbuilding. A similar pattern was to be found in the coal industry. In this instance coal owners showed great reluctance to reorganise themselves (a legacy of the particulars of British Economic development). Voluntary schemes instituted by the state were rejected or ignored by the owners and in 1938, in the face of opposition from private capital, a bill was introduced to Parliament which would have forced reorganisation upon the industry. Of course all this was being done in the light of Keynes **General Theory** (1936), a work which guided not only forms of industrial reorganisation but also social intervention. Schemes for control of the unemployed were instituted; Distressed Areas policy was pursued. Control of the unemployed was carried out before Keynes major work but his **General Theory** focussed upon the causes (as the bourgeois economist saw them) of "distress" in the economy and thus became an important factor in constructing an ideology for policing the working class, for of course, global policing was via the military. Rearmament was undertaken by the state from the mid 1930s.

Keynes in 1929

These policies of the inter-war years were state capitalist although they involved little nationalisation. State control was via currency manipulation, tariff agreements, direction of industrial capital, policing the civil population and military might. And all this within a world of shifting national hierarchies. Individually such policies were not unique but taken as general ongoing strategies the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. The application of particular strategies by the state is dependant upon circumstances, but whatever these happen to be we find that the state does not withdraw from its overall control of economy and population, nor does it stand aside from international competition, military and economic. The CWO's belief that Thatcherism represents such moves away from state capitalism is born of their constricted notion of what constitutes state capitalism and the meaning of Thatcherism.

In **Theses on Thatcherism** the empirical detail is accurate enough in describing what Thatcher's government has done. As the CWO notes in the past ten years we have seen a concerted effort to rationalise parts of the economic structure to the point where they have all but disappeared: shipbuilding, steel and coal being the main victims of this policy. At the same time Thatcherism marked a break with the so-called "full employment" consensus underpinned by Keynsianism as well as a deliberate policy cutting the trades unions from formal state structures.

The general approach of the Thatcherite right grew from the failure of governments in the '70s to solve the problems of rising inflation and extending unemployment, both indicators of the general crisis of capitalism and the particular decline of Britain. Heath's government had shown itself unable to solve these problems and had been defeated by class action. This was the breeding ground for the new right. Keynsianism had run its course, it was unable to cope with the accretions of deficit financing manifesting itself as "stagflation" ie. declining profitability coupled with inflation. The new right was not alone nor the first to see the need for an alternative framework. Callaghan heralded the way forward in 1976:

> " The cosy world we were told would go on forever, where full employment would be guaranteed by a stroke of the Chancellor's pen, cutting taxes, deficit spending, that cosy world is gone."

Keith Joseph led the formation of the new right within the Heathite Tory Party, his Centre for Policy Studies becoming a focal point for an alternative economic strategy. On the face of it the new strategies were akin to the liberalism of the 19th Century with an emphasis on allowing the market to follow its "natural" course. The state, it was argued, should withdraw from its interventionary role. Friedman, Sherman et alia supplied monetarist theory whilst Hayek's individualist philosophy gave partial legitimacy to the Thatcherite school. (very much a pot pourri of ideologies) To the new right not only was nationalisation anathema so also was the participation of trades unions in government. In asserting this Thatcherism broke from the tripartism of the previous forty years. Part of the legacy of the British Keynsianism was acceptance of a direct role for unions in the state. After 1979 this was changed. A central plank of Thatcher's electoral programme and subsequent policy was to "curb the power of the unions". We well know that in essence this meant attacking the working class not because the unions represent workers interests but because sections of the bourgeoisie are not at all clear on the class nature of trade unionism. But it is also more than this. For Thatcherism is a break with the gradualism of the post-war consensus. Deepening crisis engendered the new response. Trade Unions, Social Democracy and a significant sector of the Tory Party were implicated in the policy of demand management and nationalisation. Thatcher and her henchmen took the decision that a new way was required.

The "traditional" industries which had been nationalised were to be "rationalised" and sold off. This conflicted with the political programme of Social Democracy. Labour Party and trade union self-interest was to a great extent rooted in these areas. Consequently, in the eyes of the new right trade unions as well as the working class were a barrier to the reorganisation of the British economy. Quite correctly Thatcherism pinpointed the steel, the coal and shipbuilding industries as being uncompetitive on the world market, not to mention the fact that some of the most militant sections of the working class were to be found in them. Previous to 1979 the bourgeoisie had not shown itself unable nor unwilling to cut back these enterprises, increase rates of exploitation and attack the working class. But what they had been unwilling to contemplate was reducing these industries to an industrial rump. Thatcherism was not so reluctant. Hence the opposition within reformism of the left. Hence the direct attacks upon trade unions as distinct from the working class (of course there is the ideological counterpart to these industrial strategies, namely asserting the sole reality of the individual and denying collectivity etc.)

The decision to confront these industrial drains was dependant upon three conditions. The overarching one was that of the crisis and Britain's declining position; this decline was specifically situated in the Western Bloc and within the European Community; and the third condition was a philosophy of what constituted the best way forward for British Capitalism. As regards the first condition, that of the crisis, this underpinned the electoral success of the Tories in 1979. Specifically the position within the Western Bloc and Europe gave Thatcher the strategy of abandoning centrality to industries which, irrespective of them being a drain on national profitability, had been previously considered to be strategically so important. Behind the reduction of these industries to rump status lies the partially unstated acceptance of a division of labour within the Community and the Bloc. Steel coal and shipbuilding were, in the eyes of the Tories of the new Right, beyond redemption. they were not only tainted by old Keynsian politics, they were in such a poor condition that there was no prospect of them becoming serious economic competitors on the world market. Consequently, they were to be cut back (also happening in the rest of the European Community). This would not only undermine the militant base for working class activity it would also fit nicely into the "market" oriented philosophy of Thatcherism. The industrial rumps could thus be set up for de-nationalisation: a troublesome working class would, it was hoped, be pacified; the industry would be so concentrated that profitability could be achieved. The combination of these factors would make these industries acceptable investments to private capital. Not only this, by increasing rates of exploitation of the working class, by privatising them this Tory government has helped plug a major hole in British capitalism's profitability. As yet, of course, it leaves unanswered the questions of the strategic strength or weakness of this policy. But what is answered are those who might question the reality of the Western Bloc. By accepting the non-viability of these industries in Britain Thatcherism acknowledges that the possibility of military conflict is nil within the west and that there is no possibility of the bourgeoisie here being "held to ransom" by those who have stronger steel etc. industries. (Coal is partially nullified by the state's nuclear programme). In this scenario the bloc is here to stay and as a result of national bourgeoisies should accept defeat in certain areas and concentrate on those which are shown to be most

successful for them.

Thatcherism has not yet given up Britain's role as a national capital as the CWO would have us believe. It has reoriented it. The "tertiarisation" it sees occurring is an acceptance by the Tory government that British national capital can best compete by strengthening financial and city institutions and by drawing overseas investment into the economy plus any crumbs that might be had from tourism.

Nor is Britain moving away from state capitalism. The state today is as central to economic and social organisation as it was pre-1979. Indeed the control it has over civil society is now at a higher level than it has been since the last World War. Privatisation continues apace. This is not only an ideological imperative, it is one which pays off for capital. At the small level it gives the present government a "cash-flow" to finance tax cuts and help keep a declining exchequer afloat. But at the larger level the policy adopted by Thatcherism has produced a "leaner" industrial structure. This is a state policy. Whether in the long term it is better than extending nationalisation is a question separate from that of state capitalism. Even with the large scale privatisation being pursued we have not witnessed the state withdrawing from overall economic control. Despite the free-market rhetoric the Manchester school is not alive and well and living in 10 Downing Street. Thatcher is not Cobden and Joseph is not Ricardo. The state continues to guide and direct the economy. Because it has chosen a new industrial-financial strategy it has required new techniques or rather greater emphasis on old ones. Control of interest rates, for example, has been central to Thatcher's policies; tightening state spending, public borrowing and using taxation to cut public spending is not a withdrawal of the state from controlling social-economic life, it is to continue it by marginalising sections of the population and using the "market" lie to control them. At another level the state has centralised control by undercutting the power of local councils, by "tightening purse strings". This had both ideological and economic impact and illustrates a possible strategy of control available to state capitalism (cf. France where at the same time local government was being decentralised, would the **CWO** see anti state capitalist forces at work here?) The deep recession of the years of immediate victory after 1979 was state organised.

At the same time the state has also continued to extend the organs of social control. Whilst it is possible that a Social Democratic government might not have extended the "secret police" apparatus as far as the Tory right it is certainly true that it would not have dismantled it. This apparatus has amassed greater and greater importance for over seventy years. The onset of decadence, the revolutionary nature of class struggle in 1917, the impact of war forced bourgeoisies to develop of extend organs of internal repression. Thatcherism recognises as well as an bourgeois faction the necessity for these. State capitalism means not only organising economic interests in the world market, it also requires supervision and control of hostile internal elements, particularly a militant working class. And there is of course the military wing of capitalism.

There has been no decline in the state capitalist content in British national capital, a change in emphasis, yes, and perhaps a significant decline in its position in the hierarchy of capitals. But as has been said the flea, irrespective of its size, remains a flea.

Conclusions

This excursion into the question of state capitalism in Britain is not arcane. It is one which helps focus the way in which we see decadence. How we appraise the present policies of Thatcherism and question the extent to which they signify a successful assault upon the economic crisis ties into not only our detailed economic analyses but the overarching ideas of whether social systems progress and decline. There is at least one member of the **CWO** who does appear to be questioning the "meta-historical" significance of the bedrock of the Left Communist theory of capital's decadence. We would ask the comrades of the **CWO** and all others who are moving towards rejecting it (or who don't accept it) to stop and ask themselves what becomes of major planks of our political programme if this step is taken: where does it leave you with the problems of national liberation, reformism and world revolution? When Marx, Luxemburg, Bukharin et al. perceived the fall of capital in the mechanics of its structure they showed that deterioration of the system could be guided and informed by a historical materialism; this might not allow one the short-term possibility of achieving the goal of communism but it demonstrated that it was a real historical possibility and that this could be brought nearer by adopting strategies consistent with this materialism. The system is decadent. But it will not vanish of its own accord. Only conscious class activity will destroy it, activity which can only come from recognising the traps set by a decaying system.

These traps are:
(1) the historical redundancy of democratic parliamentary institutions which can now only express the imperatives of decadence, the need to tie the working class to national-imperialist policies;
(2) the lie that the working class can gain anything from participating in trade union activity, permanently constituted organs of economic struggle inevitably become agents of capitalism;
(3) just as the economic organs of reformism have been transformed into anti-working class institutions so the same is true of their political expressions, social democracy (in all its guises) is now merely one voice in the cacophony of decadence. The siren calls of reformism are probably the biggest trap facing the working class;
(4) with the emergence of decadence and the shifting division of the global markets among a few major powers so the possibility of meaningful national liberation was lost; irrespective of the extent of radical rhetoric of national struggles - against U.S. imperialism etc. - they cannot furnish the working class with a platform for its political programme;
(5) flowing from all these political positions is the necessity for the proletariat and its political expressions to avoid the organisational traps of decadent forces. The way forward for the working class can only be in historically specific organs which to date are soviets. Only through these can the degradations of the decadent system be overcome. (7)

Flett

Notes.

(1) A non-materialist survey can be found in **The Idea of Progress** by **J.D.Bury.**

(2) For significant discussions which tough upon this see **Karl Marx's Theory of History** by **G.A.Cohen** and **Making History** by **A.Callinicos.**

(3) Crucial works here are **Studies in the Development of Capitalism. M.Dobb, The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism** ed. **R.Hilton, Passages From Antiquity to Feudalism** and **Lineages of the Absolutist State, P.Anderson;** additionally Engel's **Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State** is also a major valuable source.

(4) The **CWO** misses the point when it writes "The suffering and misery it (capitalism) inflicted on the working class is not the issue" **(RP 21 p26).** Misery imposed by capitalism is a central issue for it is upon this that larger class conflict is engendered and not only this, it is the question around which more often than not individuals are drawn into revolutionary commitments.

(5) F. Sternberg, starting from a Luxemburgist economics cogently argued that the immediate post World War 2 situation would see a crisis of capitalism to match that which followed 1918 (see **The Coming Crisis).** In the event the optimism on the possibility of a large class response c.1945 was not fulfilled.

(6) One of the debates which has raged through the revolutionary movement for the past two decades is that on the question of the economic basis of capitalism. Ranged against the Luxemburgist analysis is that of the Falling Rate of Profit (defended by the **CBG**) exemplified in the work of **Henryk Grossman** and **Paul Mattick.** Irrespective of how one argues about the ins and outs of these distinct theories it is undoubtedly true to say that correct political conclusions can flow from either one. Thus, although the **CBG** sees the saturation of markets theory as incorrect we nonetheless acknowledge the correctness of Rosa Luxemburg's political positions which were linked to a belief in the decadence of the capitalist system.

(7) For an examination of how decadence and the defeats of the 1920s affected the role of revolutionary organisations and their relationships to the working class see correspondence with **PC** published elsewhere in **Bulletin 14.**

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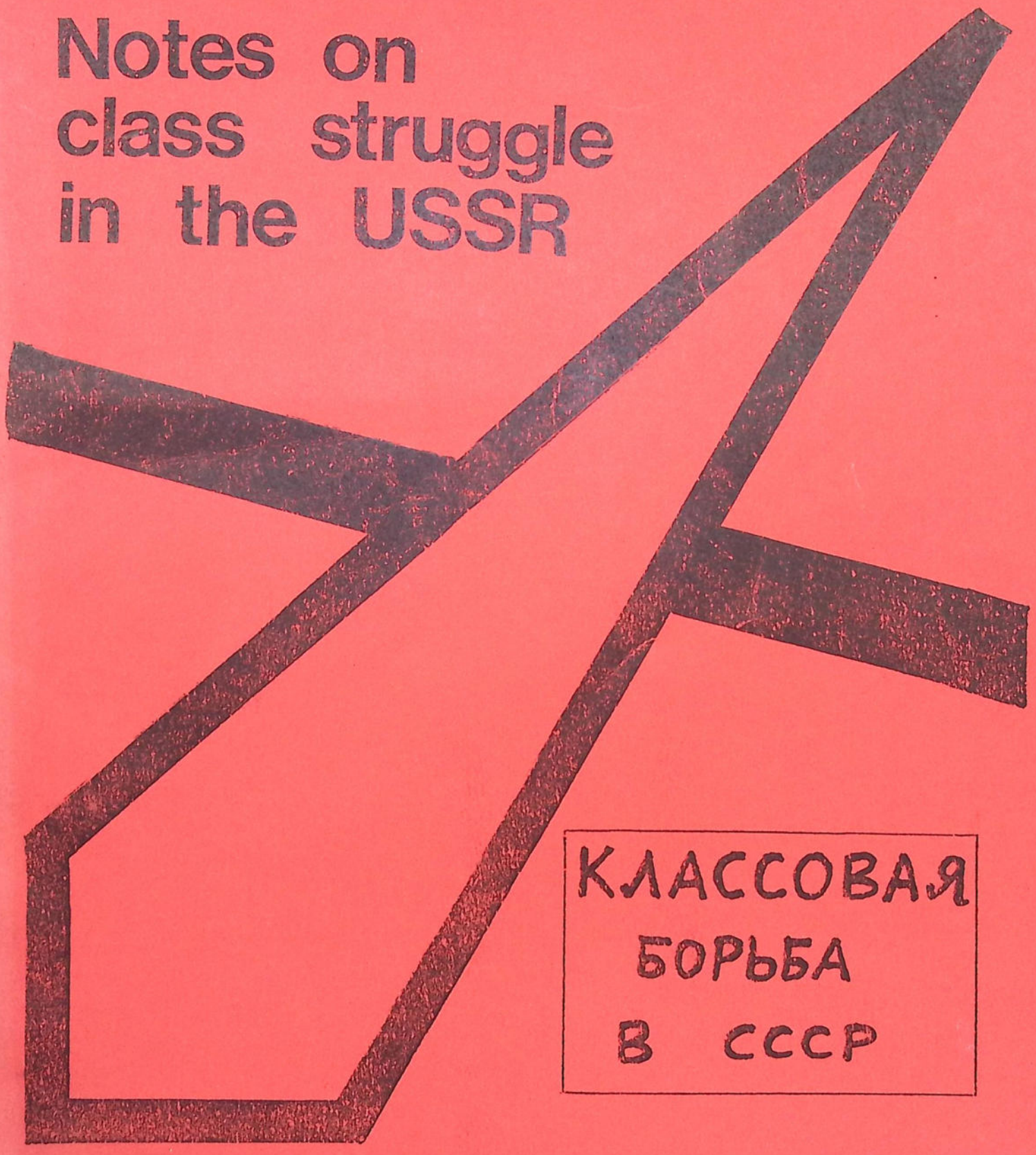
SUBVERSION

DISCUSSION PAPER No4

Notes on class struggle in the USSR



КЛАССОВАЯ БОРЬБА В СССР

PREFACE

This is the fourth discussion paper produced for a conference held by the SUBVERSION group on the 1st July 1989. The main theme of the conference is "the importance of the market and bureaucracy for capitalism and its enemies".

The first paper dealt with the basis of capitalist economy, and went on to identify two primary laws: a "law of value" and a "law of command", in line with Capital's twin but contradictory needs to enforce both "generalised competition" and "structured order". It examined these concepts in relation to aspects of crisis in the USSR and the Western banking system.

The second paper looks at the specific example of Japan, dealing with the non-bourgeois capitalist revolution of 1868, the consequent relationship between State and industry, and the effectiveness of the "plan-oriented market economy system" since the Korean War. Attention is given to the "dual workforce", divided in accordance with the structure of the economy.

The third discussion paper defends the ideas of "decadence" and "the world tendency towards State capitalism" associated with the pro-Bolshevik part of the "ultra-left". The capitalist "beast" is described as having been on a life-support system since 1914. Attention is given to Keynesianism and the economic role of the British State in the Thatcher era.

The present paper deals with the bureaucratic nature of Russian and 'Soviet' capitalism through the ages, and the changing forms of working class struggle against it since the Bolshevik counterrevolution. It also looks at the present and likely future impact of Gorbachev's reforms, and gives a brief account of local revolutionary extremists, particularly in Leningrad.

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Comments upon or criticism of any or all of the discussion papers will be gratefully received at the same address. Or you can write to the author of the first and fourth pamphlets at Red Menace, B.M.Wild, London, WC1N 3XX (full address), and to the authors of the third pamphlet at Box CBG, Boomtown Books, 167 King Street, Aberdeen. The author of the second pamphlet can be contacted c/o the Subversion address.

To
our comrades on the
Eastern front

INTRODUCTION

These Notes provide a general account, an outline of what Bolshevik-style capitalism has meant in practice, how it relates to the Russian bureaucratic tradition, and how it has conflicted with the men and women it dispossesses. A full analysis of proletarian resistance to 'Soviet' capitalism since 1917 remains to be published, but as Gorbachev's reforms begin to hit home over the next few years, the need for such an analysis should become clear. Not only this, but as struggles in the USSR begin to break into new ground, in uneasy correspondence with the reforms, it will become even more important for us to make contact with our comrades on the Eastern front. A meaningful contribution by Western-based revolutionaries to a comprehensive theoretical critique will probably only materialise when such contact gives rise to practical cooperation. Our difficulties in analysing struggles over there must be at least as difficult as 'Soviet'-based comrades' difficulties in analysing struggles in the West.

ROOTS OF THE RUSSIAN BUREAUCRATIC TRADITION

One very widespread idea about the USSR is that 'Soviet' (1) government and economic management have taken their present form because of a mind-bogglingly extreme series of events in 1917 that changed everything. This view is held by virtually all political activists of left, right and centre, and by most non-political people too. We only need take a brief look at Russian history to check whether or not this view is justified (2).

Before the 13th century the rulers of the small Russian State shared political power with popular assemblies of "townspeople", and with a senate formed by the independent nobility. Neither the nobles nor the larger cities paid any taxes. These were characteristics shared by the kinds of system being developed in western Europe at the same time. However, in Russia the princely court derived its maintenance from a general poll tax and not from royal domains. This tax was imposed on the whole of the rural population on behalf of the sovereign, who also held supreme judicial power. Although this would seem to imply that the society was more absolutist than Western-style feudalism, in other ways it was less so, since the nobles had absolute land-rights, and their ownership of land did not depend on the provision of a fighting force, as it did in the West (3). The nobles (boyars) were not particularly weak in face of the princes, but in fact the absence of primogeniture meant that both classes were weak. Land was usually split up among a landowner's sons, and the size of estates was thus reduced after each generation, leading to the disorganisation that was one factor in the collapse of the society when faced with the Mongol invasion. The Mongol hordes were fully victorious by 1240.

During the invasion most of the major cities of eastern Russia were destroyed, and there followed an even more successful political campaign against the towns. In the latter campaign the Russian princes and boyars supported the Mongol overlords; the urban assemblies ceased to exist and craftsmanship declined rapidly (4).

The Mongol khans ruled by means of massive taxation, conscription, and by holding the right to appoint local Russian princes. Mongol officials and census-takers formed an army of bureaucrats who were soon at work throughout the whole of Russian territory, imposing taxes and tolls. Everything was reduced to effciency in matters of military administration, and relied upon a service class bound to serve the khan with absolute obedience.

Meanwhile, Moscow was well-situated with regard to trade routes: this meant that one Muscovite prince, Ivan Kalita, was able to accrue money and use it to buy prisoners and influence in Sarai, the Mongol capital. Secondly, Moscow was relatively safe from direct Mongol attack, and its princes extended their usefulness to Sarai by crushing anti-Mongol uprisings in lesser Slav principalities. These factors helped Muscovy grow stronger by means of self-Mongolisation. The Muscovite

prince was a slave to the khan, but a khan to his subordinates. Or, as Marx put it, he had to blend in himself "the characters of the Tartar's hangman, sycophant, and slave-in-chief" (5). Muscovy eventually won the important right of collecting the taxes imposed by the Mongols on the Slavs.

The rise of Muscovite despotism, heavily influenced by Mongol patterns, involved the rise of a new type of civil and military serving-men, who, as temporary holders of plots of State land (pomestiya), were unconditionally at the disposal of their supreme lord. Holders of pomestiya, or 'pomeshchiks', gathered some of the tax revenue from peasants, thus lightening the load of the professional bureaucrats. However, handicrafts, which recovered slowly, and commerce, which offered greater opportunities, were kept under direct or indirect State control. Government bureaucrats fixed the prices at which merchants had to buy goods given to the State as tax payments, and compulsorily purchased goods in order to sell them at inflated prices. Even the foreign merchants had to allow their goods to be priced by the State. Tax-collectors often doubled as the Tsar's commercial agents. The pomeshchiks, or holders of office land, sold their grain surpluses on the market, thus providing another direct link between commerce and the State. There was very little room for independent professional trade, and even the richest merchants were not immune from confiscations by their despotic masters.

Rural serfdom was introduced between c.1500 and c.1650, in the face of much peasant resistance, including some full-scale rebellions by revolutionary peasants and slaves. Urban commercial activity declined in the century leading up to 1650, and boyars lost the right to leave State service. What remained of the boyar class was defeated by the service gentry. These developments, taken together, added up to a major victory on the part of the autocratic State.

Under Peter the Great (1689-1725) the foundations of modern economic development were laid. The State organised the requisite investment, and provided the demand for goods, mainly military matériel (guns, clothing, sailcloth, ammunition). It also organised the supply of labour, which was forcibly mobilised from rural districts and from the ranks of conscripts and the destitute (criminals, prostitutes, orphans, etc.). Unlike in Western Europe, the State did not merely supervise the new industries; it directly managed the bulk of heavy industry, and part of light industry, thereby employing the majority of all industrial workers as forced labour. State munitions and metallurgical industries grew in the Urals; textile works sprang up around Moscow to supply the army and navy. Many foreign specialists were induced to migrate to Russia.

Meanwhile, agriculture was largely neglected; no funds were directed towards its technical development. The bonds of serfdom were tightened. Rather than wait a few centuries while serfs became free peasants before ending up as agricultural proletarians (a process which in England took from c.1350 to c.1750), Peter expanded forced labour. He began the transfer to private ownership of crown and State lands along with the peasants living on them, so-called "State peasants" whose condition s of existence had previously been somewhat freer than those of private serfs.

Serfdom spread in industry too. After 1721 merchants could buy whole villages for their factories, as long as the labour remained bound to the factory and not the factory-owner. In every factory —and they all manufactured either under the direct surveillance of State functionaries or by governmental concession— decisions on company policy were taken by a small bureaucratic group whose main objective was not so much profit as advancement up the 'Table of Ranks', Peter's equivalent of the nomenklatura. Decisions on production and investment were influenced far more by political considerations and physical factors than by economic accountability and the cost of currency (6). As for the serf-workers themselves, there is little documentation about their resistance, although it is known that they risked being summarily shot or even thrown into furnaces if they stepped too far out of line.

Peter's policies achieved short-term growth, but the success this brought fed the illusion that investment resources arising from increased peasant productivity could be obtained solely from cuts in peasant incomes. There was no

agrarian revolution. Eventually rural serfdom was disconnected from economic development and became merely an obligation to the nobility in the post-Petrine "period of stagnation". In the 18th century many nobles required money dues from their serfs, and many peasants left their villages to work as artisans or industrial workers, simply in order to pay their dues. More life was breathed into serfdom per se when labour-service dues cale back into fashion as grain prices rose and canals spread, leading nobles to step up direct exploitation, which was also their reaction to their own emancipation in 1785, nearly 600 years after the Magna Carta. Serfdom also spread geographically under Catherine the Great (1762-96).

In the early 19th century Russian backwardness became chronic. Geographical problems and the non-existence of a free bourgeoisie meant that there was no real national market, and railway construction was kept at a low level for fear of peasant rebellion. Many urban workers still had to pay money dues, and many kept rural "reserves", which impeded their domestication via factory labour and discipline. Serf labour in industry restricted productivity growth; moreover, owners of industrial serfs faced suffocating regulations on quantity and quality of output, and restrictions on labour deployment. Consequently those landowners who doubled as industrialists failed to undertake much new investment. Serf-entrepreneurs, however, who helped contribute to landowners' income, often did introduce technical innovations, as did many Jewish and Old Believer entrepreneurs. But their enterprises had to operate under the tightest form of State control of all; labour relations in particular were subject to an even greater degree of government control than in enterprises owned by landowners. This control was often evaded, but usually only by means of bribery of State officials.

When the serfs were freed in 1861, in an effort to forestall peasant uprisings and possible future military defeat, the peasant communes obstructed migration from the villages, and poor techniques hindered growth. Peasants remained faced with a complex web of obligations to former landowners or the State. The absence of agrarian revolution led to major problems. Peasant famine "had" to be ensured via taxation as a deliberate act of policy, in order to contibute to the funding of industry, as would later happen in the 1930s. Secondly, the problems of demand and supply both had to be tackled by means of government spending. This did not mean Keynesian "deficit financing"; it meant direct orders, covered by current tax revenue. In the case of the railways it meant large-scale nationalisation by 1900. Private-sector industrialists were more involved in bureaucratic wheeler-dealing than in efficiency-raising projects, because too much independence would not have been in their best interests.

Another distinctive feature of Russian industrialisation was the investment of foreign capital on a very large scale. Much of this took the form of investment banking, or foreign purchase of Russian State bonds. Many of the shares in Russian banks were foreign-owned, partly because banks were considered a low-risk option because of their importance to the economy and their reliance on State support. Indeed, it was the Treasury's credit department that controlled the entire Russian financial apparatus.

The industrial working class was also distinctive in many ways. A high proportion of factory workers worked in factories that were very large. One reason lay in tradition : many slave factories had also been very large. Another reason was what today whould be called blat ("influence", or "pull"): big firms had more of it than little firms, and won preferential access to credit. Rapid industrial industrialisation without local authority housing meant that employers often set up "factory villages", on the grounds that big prisons were cheaper to run than smaller ones. And of course some such villages had existed since long before 1861. Industrial plants also had to be fairly well integrated, because of the poor state of the infrastructure. These factors combined to ensure that Russia had the largest factories in the world.

The industrial revolution of the 1880s and 1890s left many wage-labourers with varying degrees of attachment to the rural community, since usually the peasants who left the villages to find work in the towns carried passports issued by the communes, and used to return home for holidays, for the summer, or when they retired. However, this was less common in the more advanced industries and

in the largest urban centres, especially by 1900. Labour turnover also took the form of migration from factory to factory, as well as from town to countryside. The turnover in some companies was as high as 100% per year. This meant that often even unskilled workers had to be offered long-term contracts, which hindered reorganisation of the work process.

Factory discipline generally was a major problem. Stopping work on major and minor saints' days, as well as on "Holy" Mondays, was common practise. In 1900 the average working year was only 264 days. Management was not only faced with absenteeism, but also with lateness, violation of production norms, and a large amount of pilfering (7). Pilfering in particular often proved impossible to combat with normal disciplinary methods; sometimes "trusty" workers were roped in to condemn workmates to a good hiding. At the same time, workers with more spirit often used to get their own back on foremen by subjecting them to the "wheelbarrow and hood" treatment.

Government intervention in labour relations at enterprise level declined after 1880, but overall financial control of industry was retained, via loans, subsidies, protection and large orders. Meanwhile, most legislation on the working day, responsibility for industrial accidents, and female and child labour, favoured the workers. For reasons of unrest-prevention, the Ministry of the Interior was often at loggerheads with the Ministry of Finance. The police force grew in size and strength, and in 1902 organised the first trade-unions, which helped the Ministry of the Interior spy on both workers and employers, supposedly for the Tsar, but really for the State bureaucracy. Meanwhile, most employers backed the Ministry of Finance, and favoured political rather than economic concessions.

The famous revolution of 1905, in the towns at least, represented a change in the main form of workers' struggle, even though it failed to overthrow capitalism. Theft and labour turnover were superseded by strikes and riots. The driving force was provided by the artisans and the most skilled factory workers (8). Achievements were made in the fields of health and unemployment insurance, wages and hours. There followed a wave of repression (1907-12), and then a period of resurgence (1912-14). In July 1914, on the eve of war, strikes and riots ripped through St.Petersburg, opposed by the Bolsheviks on the local Party Committee once they realised they were out of control (9). The most active rebels were urbanised youth and young workers just in from the countryside. Some rebels seem to have been involved in the Bolshevik underground, in opposition to the "wiser" "social fireman" types higher up the Party hierarchy.

CLASS STRUGGLE IN WARTIME, 1914-21

The importance of the proletarian revolutionary movement in Russia for the international class struggle is usually drastically overestimated. In Russia the soviets, or workers' councils, were generally Menshevised prior to July 1917 and Bolshevised after March 1918. Attempts to centralise the autonomous workers' movement (10) on the basis of new soviets, in opposition to the old ones, were nowhere to be seen. This does not compare very well with the movement in Germany (1918-21), where the IKD denounced the official soviets after a mere week, and where the revolutionary elements in the enterprise organisations formed their own action committees out of which grew an organisation (the AAUD) which at its peak had 150 000 members. The AAUD's aims were quite clearly to fight for the real dictatorship of the proletariat, and not to potter around with negotiations, sectoral struggles or activities within the unions or the old soviets. In Russia the revolutionary tendency within the factory committees never successfully managed to centralise outside of government and trade-union control, despite a shortlived attempt to do so between August and November 1917 (11). Many enterprises were indeed seized by workers between October 1917 and March-April 1918, but labour discipline was considerably tightened at the end of this period and, bearing this in mind, it is fair to see the Brest-Litovsk treaty of March 1918 as sounding the death-knell of the autonomous proletarian revolution. In Russia, the revolutionary content of the working class insurgency that brought one bosses' war to an end was

confined to the enterprises before being crushed in time for the State to mobilise for another bosses' war: the civil war. It was only in the south-west Ukraine that a revolutionary proletarian force confronted all sides in any concerted fashion.

The process of counterrevolution has been adequately covered elsewhere, especially by Maurice Brinton (12), although one should ignore his democratic and managementist perspective! The questions that concern us here are: 1) what form did capitalist management take during and after the counterrevolution? 2) What form did working class struggle take in opposition to this?

The main capitalist organising force in Russia, as we have shown above, had always been the State, not the bourgeois market. For several centuries, the State bureaucracy had developed, albeit in fits and starts, and can only be seen as inherently reactionary in relation to proletarian revolution (or bourgeois reform), not in relation to capitalism. When the geographically and sectorally skewed nature of industrialisation propelled the economy into crisis in 1914, the methods used by the authorities to deal with this crisis would grow more severe as the wars dragged on, but they did not change in nature. They all involved stepping up the economic role of the State.

Faced with an initial supply crisis in 1915, the government set up a network of War Industries Committees, led by prominent political freemasons (13). These included representatives of management, government and workers, and by 1917 had spread over almost the whole field of industrial production. During the first half of 1918 the Bolshevik-run "Supreme Economic Council" (Vesenkha) took over these bodies --or what was left of them -- and converted them, under the name of glavki and tsentry, into administrative organs subject to its own control (14).

Most proletarians' lives deteriorated substantially between 1918 and 1921. The death-toll was 8 million, including 7.5 million from starvation or disease. The number of industrial workers fell from 3 million in 1917 to fewer than 1.5 million in 1920-21, as people returned to the villages to benefit from the post-October land share-out, or simply to stand a better chance of survival. Thus, once more, migration ("flight" rather than "fight") was a major means of struggle against the hardships imposed by capitalism. At the same time, though, there was also an influx of new workers, including the children of workers who had gone back to the villages, and even some who had migrated from the villages.

In general the urban workforce did not act as if it were at all "domesticated". Struggle continued in various forms: theft, absenteeism, insubordination, low productivity. After the nationalisations of June 1918, and the subsequent growth of wages in kind, labour discipline plummeted, and continued to frustrate the productivity campaign, even after piece-rates spread across the country.

As enterprises closed because of shortages and lack of workers, because anti-Bolshevik managers shut them down, or because owners or managers embezzled huge sums of money, workers too took part in economic sabotage. Hungry workers and soldiers stole industrial products, materials and tools to sell or barter for food or fuel. Workers had to try to get hold of boots, petrol, salt or matches to pass on to the peasants for food, either directly or through traders. Thefts continued despite the repeated searches carried out by the Cheka at the factory gates (15).

Many workers continually arrived late, preferred drinking to working once they had arrived, or simply stayed away altogether, especially in July or August. In 1920 the "average worker" reported for only 219 days (16). Meanwhile, many enterprise politicos (including some workers) left to take up jobs in the administration of party, unions, army or State. But there were still enough enterprise bureaucrats to put their backs into the productivity campaign, which of course might also have been called the labour discipline campaign. Bonuses were not of much use in encouraging discipline, since they were paid in inflated roubles, but neither was the practice of paying rations according to occupation rather than output. Eventually in November 1919 the "militarisation of labour"

involved the tying of rations to productivity (i.e. "piece-rates in kind"), the generalisation of one-man management (already in existence in May 1918), and a rapid growth in the power and differentials of specialists, who then received even more abuse and harassment from workers. This campaign also saw the introduction of "comradely courts" in the enterprises; sentences in extreme cases could include hard labour, which during such a chronic food shortage must often have been tantamount to execution.

In the resistance, men tended to specialise in absenteeism and lateness, while women preferred the more direct crimes of theft and abuse of administrators (17), although of course this is a generalisation! When labour conscription was introduced in January 1920, supervised by none other than Dzerzhinski, head of the Cheka, non-compliance continued, but penalties included a 60% deduction in rations for as little as 3 days' absence. In 1920 productivity rose at last!

It should also be mentioned that, whilst this struggle was raging, some workers and soldiers willingly worked "subbotniks" (extra days), especially when the perceived threat from Denikin and the Polish army was greatest. Probably there were factors other than the war effort involved, such as access to wood for fuel, or even genuine solidarity with hard-up soldiers, not to mention extra rations.

THE POST-WAR STRIKE WAVE

Until the summer of 1920, the authorities had turned a blind eye to the illegal markets which existed in almost all towns and which provided much of the food consumed by urban workers. But then Zinoviev issued a blanket ban on privately-organised commerce, and the famine intensified. Even the official rations were distributed irregularly and often in less than the prescribed quantities. As the peasants were known to have surplus grain in their possession, having concealed it from the government committees, militia detachments were ordered to set up roadblocks to stop grain coming into the towns for sale on the illegal markets. Workers saw these detachments for precisely what they were, enforcers of starvation. In February 1921, barely 2 months after the end of the war on European fronts, strikes and mass street demonstrations erupted in Petrograd, immediately politicising the simmering conflict between workers and the capitalist authorities. Soon the naval fortress at Kronstadt was in open rebellion, the proletarians there forming a Provisional Revolutionary Committee which openly called for the power of newly-elected soviets rather than the Bolshevik party dictatorship. Other factors which helped spark off the revolt included the movement of resistance to despotic command within the armed forces, particularly the navy. The strikes in Petrograd escalated. The giant Putilov works renewed its reputation. Workers demanded the withdrawal of militia detachments, the liberation of working class political prisoners, and the reestablishment of urban food markets. The Kronstadt comrades went even further and demanded the abolition of political police in the factories, the equalisation of rations, and an end to the State coercion of peasants and artisans.

Faced with resistance on such a scale, the overriding consideration of the party was order, order not jeopardised by a movement obstructing the growth of the national product of wage-labour. They could not permit this order to be subverted by an organised movement of those at the bottom. When such a movement gave rise to strikes, demonstrations, even uprisings, and began openly to accuse the Bolshevik party of being usurpers, liars who spoke in the name of those who were proving in practice to be their enemies, blood had to be spilt. The delegates to the Tenth Party Congress were quite categorical. On this the Party was absolutely united (18).

An uprising in Kronstadt. Strikes in Petrograd. Rumblings in Moscow. At all costs the movement had to be kept disunited. Foodstuffs were rushed to Moscow. Roadblocks were removed from around Petrograd, despite the state of siege. Kronstadt remained in revolt, in open defiance of the State. After military mistakes by the insurgents, and several mutinies on the part of troops sent in by the government, the fortress and its rebels were crushed with thousands of

casualties before being buried under calumnies still trotted out by Leninists and Trotskyists to this day (19).

CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE 1920S.

In March 1921 the government introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP), thereby replacing grain requisitions with a tax in kind, privatising small firms, legalising private trade and forcing firms and trusts to balance their books. The commanding heights of the economy, however, remained in State hands. Working class composition changed as the economy recovered from a very low base: gross industrial output in 1921 was around 31% of the 1913 figure (20).

From 1921 to 1923, management hiring policy tended to be to fire juveniles, newly-employed women, and "yesterday's peasants", in order to replace them with skilled and experienced workers returning from the countryside and the army. But from 1923 increasing numbers of inexperienced and unskilled rural migrants secured jobs in the towns, partly as a result of managers attempting to cut wages bills when filling vacancies. As a consequence, the average age of the workforce fell. Meanwhile, workers themselves made sure of a fairly rapid rate of turnover, and there was a shortage of skilled workers. The average size of a workplace increased, partly because this was government financial policy, as it had been during the industrial revolution, and partly because many small and medium-sized firms failed to reopen after being nominally denationalised.

Although no-one starved during NEP, unemployment doubled between 1923 and 1928, reaching the unprecedentedly high figure of 12%. The bureaucracy and the unions tried to get managers to hire labour-power via the labour exchanges, probably to ensure that urbanised workers were hired first, but by 1925 the employers won the legal right to hire whoever they wanted to.

Unemployment had many causes: the economic policies of NEP, the influx of former peasants into the towns, and the demobilisation of 3.5 million soldiers between 1921 and 1924. Some jobless army veterans were very poor, and often had to do without winter clothes or proper housing; such people occasionally turned to robbery, or organised demonstrations. However, enterprise book-balancing and industrial concentration brought about unemployment the simple way: via redundancies. "Rationalisation" began in 1924, and the dole queues got longer. The replacement of sacked workers with raw recruits from the countryside increased the antagonism between "urbanised" and "new" workers. Competition for seasonal jobs grew very intense, and many of those who were "lucky" enough to find such precarious jobs often had to sleep in public parks, uninhabited buildings, or the streets. Unemployment hit the young, unskilled and female more than the middle-aged and male, although there were jobless proletarians in all categories. Many unemployed juveniles fell "under the influence of the street", where they "associated with criminal types and engaged in begging, hooliganism and prostitution, and freely used drugs and alcohol" (20). We shall see below how there was already a thriving criminal scene for them to become part of.

The government was kind enough to organise public works projects, where the unemployed could dig ditches, clean streets or chop wood, but not surprisingly many people prferred to turn to crime, and most armed robbers were unemployed men in their twenties. There was also unemployment assistance, which was supposed to include meal coupons (until 1924), temporary free accommodation, and some money. But to qualify one had to have lived in a town for at least three months, and to have had work experience. Even then, rates varied according to skill level and experience. The average handout was a mere third of the minimum wage, and fewer than half of the unemployed received any aid at all. Occasionally unemployed people physically attacked the offices which symbolised their plight. According to the head of the OGPU, in 1924 an "anti-Soviet" movement was growing among Moscow's unemployed (21), who circulated anti-government leaflets and "petitions" to create committees of the unemployed. More than 3000 unemployed metalworkers attended a meeting where they demanded faster growth, cuts in imports and the working day, and increased benefits. Unemployed workers --many of them army veterans-- ransacked the Odessa labour-exchange and killed the director and

several of his staff, immediately after holding a demo to demand jobs. Though such outbreaks of organised unemployed "hooliganism" were usually isolated and "spontaneous", they continued throughout the late 1920s.

Crime spread in the major cities, particularly among bezprizorniks, homeless children who had run away from home or been orphaned. There were also professional criminals around, but information on them is scarce. Bezprizorniks, though, were themselves quite "professional", and often formed gangs for their own protection. Boys specialised in theft, girls in theft and prostitution. Organisations were created to divide the spoils. These rebels lived where they could -- in parks, abandoned buildings, boats, or, if they could afford it, in hostels. The use of drugs such as cocaine and alcohol was common. Indeed, many of the girls went on the game to support a cocaine, opium or morphine habit. Prostitution was quite open in many parts of Moscow; like drugs, crime and the bezprizorniks, it resisted attempts by police, party and government to clean up the city. Needless to say, there were the usual complications. People worried about being mugged or raped, or about their children turning into rebels.

Whilst it is probably true to say that, for those in work, living standards rose in the 1920s, one major countertendency was the deterioration of housing conditions, despite the fall in rents. By 1927 many workers in Moscow, especially those who had moved to the city after 1921, lived in Tsarist-style squalor. Often two or more families would share the same room. The populations of factory barracks swelled. Many homeless people lived in "overnight barracks"; others lived in corridors, sheds or kitchens. Disrepair was also a major problem, and workers often stole from workplaces in order to repair their rooms and staircases. Complaints were made at factory committee and production meetings.

In the workplaces, the class struggle continued apace. The working class had undergone quite a few changes since 1921, but the fight went on. In industry, urbanised hereditary proletarians tended to be literate, but fairly domesticated, but new workers were anything but tame, and often clashed with foremen over such matters as taking days off, drinking on the job, and fighting one another. The latter group tended to be among the less literate --indeed, to some they were "bumpkins"-- and used to get out of the towns whenever they could. Between these two extremes were such people as former artisans undergoing the deskilling process; they tended to resent keeping the boss's time rather than their own. Outside of industry, there were a large number of clerical and office workers, as well as "service personnel" working as doormen, cooks, laundresses, etc. And of course there were the domestic servants who cleaned up after Nepmen, professionals, academics and top party people like Lenin and Trotsky. Between 1923 and 1926 the number of domestics in Moscow trebled.

The managerial and higher-technical class ("cadres") expanded rapidly under NEP, and in industry the ratio of cadres to workers was much higher in 1926 than before the wars. The petty bourgeoisie, or the class of "Nepmen", thrived during the 1920s, but possessed little autonomy, often being subject to close police surveillance.

In the early years of NEP, laws governing safety and working hours were often flouted, most blatantly by private bosses, but also by bosses in the State sector. The unions were supposed to combat such violations, but until 1924 they did very little other than to chant about the need for productivity growth, putting party interests above everything. The workers soon forced them to change their tune.

After the government dealt with high industrial prices in 1923 by tightening credit and encouraging lay-offs, a wave of wildcat strikes broke out in the major industrial centres. Rumours of a general strike circulated in Moscow, but no such strike occurred, and strikes rarely involved more than individual enterprises. As pressure grew from below in 1923 and 1924, the unions quickly changed their tune, and began to pay serious attention to labour protection. No longer were the unions simply workplace cops; between 1924 and 1929 they began to balance their priorities between channelling workers' grievances and helping to enforce management policy. Labour conditions improved, and the breach between workers and the unions was partially healed. All the same, wildcat strikes did not die out, and continued to erupt over wages and labour

intensity campaigns.

After 1926, workers were officially encouraged to expose "management incompetence", and this they did, taking advantage of the "production meetings" organised by party cells and attended by workers, unions and management. Initially it tended to be the urbanised workers who turned up at these meetings, and the most vociferous were usually the fairly young and the skilled. Often such workers were party members too. The new workers, for their part, tended not to show much interest in the production meetings, and preferred to keep up their own traditions of indiscipline and laxity. However this division was gradually overcome in the years leading up to 1929, by which time many new workers joined their urbanised colleagues at the production meetings, thereby causing even more trouble for management. Workers vented their hostility toward factory administrators and specialists. Such "criticism" may have been in line with party policy, but the same cannot be said of the physical assaults. Chaos escalated as militant working class unity grew in the only way possible: from the bottom. In the end the party broke this unity by creaming off the workers' leaders and moving them into educational institutions or administrative positions, in a sort of re-run of 1917. Others, particularly the young and fit, were bribed and turned into exemplary workers during the "shock work" campaigns.

FROM THE "GREAT TURN" TO THE "GREAT FATHERLAND WAR" : 1928-41

Stalin's announcement of the "Great Turn" in November 1929 marked the onset of changes that affected the entire population. In December the targets of the first Five-Year Plan were revised upwards, and four years were now considered to be adequate instead of five. Stalin gave the go-ahead to the forcible proletarianisation of most of the peasantry, and by 1936 90% of peasants had been "collectivised", i.e. turned into wage-workers, even though many of them kept some sort of private plot. As "surplus" peasants were dragooned into the towns, the urban working class doubled in size to 24 million between 1929 and 1932.

The changes in industry were manifold. In practice, unions were excluded from the drafting of plans in 1929, and thus they lost their role in enterprise-level bargaining in exchange for a subordinate role in the State structure, as a "transmission belt" for the party. They were no longer recuperators of workers' antagonism towards management. The idea now was to centralise the entire decision-making process concerning norms and wage-levels, getting rid of local disputes altogether. The government began by accentuating differential wage-scales, rewarding what it called "true proletarians" (skilled, urbanised, "well socialised" industrial workers) with relatively high wages. Almost all workers in heavy industry were being paid piece-rates by 1928; this meant that even the unskilled were entitled to become well-paid if they became domesticated and more productive. After all, as 10-15% of the industrial working class had moved on upwards, others had to take their place.

But no amount of central "planning" could ensure orderly development. Indeed, resistance to industrial mobilisation came from managers as well as workers. Laws designed to restrict labour turnover, introduced in 1930 and 1932, were largely ignored as managers continued to poach workers from each other and to hire casual labour at the factory gates. In practice, absenteeism did not fall by as much as was officially claimed. Workers and managers built up a tradition of collusion against the bureaucratic authorities. The interests of capitalist economy as a whole, as interpreted by the central party elite, conflicted with the interests of those who ran individual enterprises. It is therefore quite wrong to identify "the bureaucracy" with the ruling class, as some have tried to do. In fact, when the government reorganised the education system, putting the emphasis on vocational training and the recruitment of party and army nominees, it was clear that it wanted to recompose the managerial class as well as the working class. This was one of the reasons for the purges of 1936-38.

As wages deteriorated in the immediate aftermath of the "Great Turn", so did working conditions, because the figure for gross output became the main indicator of an enterprise's success, and often regulations on the length of the

working day were ignored. But resistance was massive: turnover skyrocketed, as workers took advantage of a severe labour shortage. In 1930 the "average worker" was changing jobs every 8 months, and in the mining industry turnover was twice the average. Labour turnover had been high under Nicholas II and Lenin, but these levels were unprecedented. The end of unemployment in 1932 put those proletarians who wanted to work in quite a good position in that they could move from job to job to see which they liked best, as British workers would later do in the 1960s.

Real wages, though, fell between 1928 and 1932, thus providing extra funds for accumulation, and industrial output rose by about 40% in the three years leading up to 1932. But this was achieved through an 89% increase in the industrial workforce. In other words, output per head fell by more than 30%. Part of this reduction must have been due to equipment breakdowns and other inefficiencies resulting from the hectic efforts of party bureaucrats to stimulate "maximal" (but not "optimal") growth and investment. A second factor, however, was the old-fashioned stubbornness and laxity of Russian workers. "Shock work" and "socialist competition" were introduced in 1929 as an attack on workers' resistance to work intensification, but the attack was not wholly successful: shock workers were highly productive but, being in general quite young, they were sometimes the instigators of strikes. Strikes continued until 1934, whereupon the movement was beaten by the GPU, who went into the enterprises to round up the ringleaders. However, in the preceding years some of the strikes had won concessions concerning the withdrawal of wage-cuts or the increased availability of food.

It is significant that the end of strikes preceded the introduction of Stakhanovism by a mere year. Organised collective action had to be broken up before across-the-board pressure to increase industrial productivity could have any chance of success. Under Stakhanovism, which was a further development of shock work and "socialist competition", piece-rates were cut, output quotas were raised, and the stratum of fit, privileged workers loyal to the regime (usually young male scabs) was consolidated by means of soaring differentials. Stakhanovists were subject to abuse and physical attacks by more class-conscious workers, and a few were killed.

In 1936 the elite imposed the "Great Terror": one direct effect this had on the proletariat concerned the expansion of the concentration camp sector. This sector made a positive contribution to national growth in various sectors: timber, the mining of gold, platinum and coal, and construction work. The horrific conditions hardly need to be elaborated. The brutality of the regime was also seen in 1932-33, when 4½-6million people were killed off in a famine which hit the Ukraine and parts of Russia and Kazakhstan.

In industry, however, the bosses did not have everything their own way even after the Great Terror was imposed. Labour turnover and absenteeism remained at high levels throughout the 1930s. Laws had to be passed in 1938 to curb the poaching of labour, and to reintroduce "employment books" and their corollary, the blacklisting of workers sacked for disciplinary offences. A new decree toughened the restrictions on job changing and absenteeism, restrictions which had been included in the largely-neglected law of 1932. A single case of absenteeism or lateness was supposed to mean automatic dismissal and loss of enterprise housing. Managers could be disciplined for rehiring fired truants or disrupters. Workers resisted by "losing" employment books to conceal the fact of dismissal for disciplinary offences, and clocked in for each other, as workers often tend to do all across the world. Sometimes managers collaborated by imposing insignificant penalties instead of dismissal, but in 1940 absenteeism and quitting were made criminal offences, and managers had to send "bad workers" to court, or else risk ending up in the dock themselves. Even judges had to be pressurised not to take the new law too lightly, but by the time of the German invasion in June 1941 the State had gained the upper hand, reducing indiscipline by extending its use of repression to everybody who might even think of obstructing the operation of the draconian labour laws. Thus began the real and full-scale militarisation of labour in 1941 (22).

THE "GREAT FATHERLAND WAR", 1941-45

The war represented the lowest point reached by Russian and Soviet class struggle since the post-1905 repression. The defeat inflicted on workplace resistance by 1941 was made even worse when Nazi Germany invaded. In the non-occupied areas holidays were suspended, all workers in war industries (including transport workers) were placed under military discipline, and anyone not actually "engaged in social work" was liable to labour mobilisation. Many pensioners and juveniles found themselves drafted. Things were even worse for those living under German military occupation, and worse-still for those living under the SS. It was official Nazi doctrine to regard Slavs as subhumans: millions of Soviet workers were deported to slave labour enterprises in Greater Germany, and of course Jews were executed by the SS.

The war accentuated the differentiation of a workers' aristocracy: highly skilled workers in war industries, increasingly subject to Fordism, were guaranteed tolerable food rations. This meant, of course, that they were considerably better off than the rest.

Despite the appalling hardships inflicted on the Soviet people during the war, it is a fact that the overwhelming majority of them supported the war effort, and it is perhaps for this reason that there are few descriptions of workplace or social resistance. It is known, though, that some previously law-abiding proletarians turned to petty crime in order to feed themselves and their families. They usually ended up in camps, where they were known as bytoviki ("those who do things to live").

HONOUR AND REVOLT IN THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS

The concentration camps had been incorporated into the economy in 1930. The fear of starvation was the main spur to production, and in general camp labour was used in highly labour-intensive sectors (mining, lumber, construction). Most camps were in isolated areas such as the North and the Far East, but camp labour was also used to build the infrastructure (roads, railways, mines, factories) in the new industrial areas of western Siberia, the Urals and Kazakhstan, and there were convict construction sites in every city. At a rough guess, we can say that the average camp population between 1936 and 1950 was 8 million, with a death-toll of about 1 million per year. Thus the first two points to realise about the camps are that they were part of the economy, and that they were a mass phenomenon.

Although quite a few cadres were sent to the camps during the purges, it is clear that we cannot judge prisoners by their class background, but only by their position in the internal class system of the camps. In fact the divisions among prisoners were clearly laid out: there were prisoners who collaborated with the authorities, sometimes even becoming sub-screws themselves, and there were those who refused to collaborate, with varying degrees of stubbornness. The most interesting culture of non-collaboration was associated with the blatnye (pronounced blat-NEE-yuh), or "thieves". These were people who, when they were on the outside, prided themselves on never carrying ID and never doing any work. In the camps, their strictly-defined codes were as follows: no member could ever accept a job in administration, or even the kitchen, nor could he help build anything to be used against prisoners, such as fences, watch-towers or isolation cells; no part could ever be taken in supervising other prisoners; and nothing was ever to be stolen from a fellow-con (24). Finally, ex-blatnye who had broken the code and become trusties ("bitches", or suki) had to be killed at the earliest opportunity. A similar ruthlessness was evident among the suki, who were often more vicious than the official guards. To become suki they had to "kiss the stiletto", and it helped if they publicly killed former comrades. On one occasion (25) it was reported that suki threatened to withdraw support for the administration unless the blatnye were cracked down upon with greater severity.

It is likely that at least some of the blatnye had radical ideas to complement their radical practice. One of them, Mikhail Dyomin, has said that the difference between himself and Makhno was that his own gang had no leader (26). Research

into the blatnye might well reveal them as the bearers of the real communist flame during the dark years of Stalinism. Also worthy of mention are the Ukrainian prisoners from some of the wartime partisan groups, who saw themselves as heirs to the Makhnovist tradition, but without making such a radical critique as Dyomin's.

In the years immediately following VE-day, the camp population swelled to around 12 million, or at least 10% of the adult male population in the country at large. (Most of the prisoners, though by no means all, were men). This was due to the imprisonment of large numbers of armed nationalists from Russia, Poland, the Ukraine, Byelorussia and the Muslim areas, and prisoners-of-war and refugees from the areas previously under German control. Many who had been taken prisoner by German forces found themselves sent directly to Soviet camps for "treason". By 1947 the camps included sizeable numbers of Poles, Ukrainians, Germans, Finns and central Europeans, as well as Russians repatriated by the other Allied powers. There were also Japanese people, Greeks and some unfortunate Belgians and Spaniards picked up by the GPU during the Spanish civil war. Language and nationality fostered major divisions in the camps after 1945. However, many of the newer prisoners had had combat experience, and this helped fuel the eventual revolts.

Strikes and revolts erupted throughout the camp system between 1946 and 1956. The first major revolt occurred in 1947. It started in a camp near Vorkuta in the Arctic region of European Russia, and was organised by three Russians who had formerly been colonels in the Soviet army before being captured by the Germans. The revolt was well-planned, and according to one account suki and blatnye managed to sink their differences in order to unite against the guards. The guards were soon disarmed and killed, and the insurgents planned to march on Vorkuta, a huge complex of camps which by 1953 housed a million prisoners. They liberated at least one other camp, but unfortunately word reached the Vorkuta authorities about the revolt, and they were met with heavy machine-gun fire. Eventually paratroopers and dive-bombers had to be sent in to disperse them. Thousands were killed.

By 1949, anarchists and anti-régime Leninists had formed a discussion circle at Vorkuta, where they debated whether or not a war between the US and the USSR was imminent or desirable, and decided to call for a general strike in the camps. The strike call was supported only by the blatnye and monachki (religious anarcho-types), and was spurned by the Baltic and Ukrainian nationalists. In 1952, however, there were major strikes in at least two camps. In the Ekibastuz Special Camp, death-squads killed informers and raised the spirits of combative prisoners. The screws' information network broke down completely, and stool-pigeons lived in danger of retribution. Not being strong enough to launch an armed insurrection, the insurgents settled for a hunger-strike, which proved partially successful in that physical violence against prisoners was drastically reduced. In the Kengir camp there was also a major strike, but it is not known what part was played by some former members of the CNT-FAI, who had been imprisoned since 1939.

After Stalin's death in March 1953 the camp system was shaken by a massive movement of strikes and risings. Inmates at Norilsk (northern Siberia) rose in May, and Vorkuta rose in July, to be followed by Kengir (Kazakhstan) in early 1954. At Norilsk 55 000 prisoners struck, demanding to be allowed to contact their families, receive letters and parcels, and to be given regular rations. A thousand rebels were killed when the strike was suppressed. At one of the Vorkuta camps, the authorities made immediate concessions on letters and visits, and issued an ultimatum warning that the concessions would be revoked unless the prisoners left the compound. The prisoners complied, and as they did so, guards and informers picked out the ringleaders and drove them off in trucks. In another camp at Vorkuta, where Edward Buca was the strike-leader, prisoners held out for a commission to arrive from Moscow. Buca forbade extremist posters and the execution of informers, and some of the demands were met. Vorkuta prisoners "enjoyed" conditions that were not introduced in other camps until 1956. Some young men, invalids and pregnant women were released, and prisoners were allowed to receive as many letters as they liked, and were paid for work. Perhaps this relative laxity had less to do with Buca's cool-headedness and more to do with the fact that Vorkuta supplied coal to Leningrad. When the Kengir camp rose, however, the attack on the authorities was more brutal, and so was the response. Slogans appeared, urging convicts to "Arm yourselves as best you can, and attack the soldiers first!" and to "Bash the

Chekists, boys!" The prisoners held the camp for 40 days, during which makeshift weapons were fabricated with metals and chemical from the Technical Department. The State thus had to mount an operation involving sappers, infantrymen and tanks. The tanks trailed barbed wire behind them in order to subdivide the compound, and in some cases they crushed the corners and sides of huts, along with the prisoners in them. Unarmed women failed to stop the tanks and were killed under their tracks. The courage and violence of this revolt are reminiscent of the Hungarian revolution and the recent conflict in Beijing.

"CUT UP KHRUSHCHEV FOR SAUSAGE-MEAT" : WORKPLACE STRUGGLES BEFORE 1964

In 1945 an amnesty was decréed for workers who had been given 6-year or 8-year sentences in camps for absconding from their jobs, usually to go back to the countryside in search of food. Meanwhile in the workplaces there was a very slight liberalisation of atmosphere when enterprise-level collective agreements were reintroduced in 1947. Until 1957 this measure usually remained a dead letter, but occasionally a local union branch would make demands in the field of housing or social amenities. Generally such demands would be settled by ministries rather than by local managers, whose autonomy in such matters was limited to the right to introduce very slight salary revisions.

The years 1956 and 1957 marked a turning-point in Soviet labour relations. In 1956 workers were freed from being "tied" to specific workplaces, and quitting was no longer a criminal offence. In 1957 administration by industrial ministries in Moscow was replaced by a system of regional economic councils (sovnarkhozy). Although plan fulfilment remained the dominant characteristic of the economic system, and the only main change in the "planning" field was that the autarchic tendencies associated with ministries were partially transferred to the sovnarkhozy, there were in fact major changes in worker-management relations at enterprise level.

The central authorities began to criticise unions for lack of initiative, and spoke of the unions' role in safeguarding workers' rights. Laws introduced in 1957 and 1958 gave enterprise union branches more rights concerning the settlement of labour disputes and the regulation of economic activity. The idea, of course, was to turn unions into a recuperative force, something they had not been since 1929. This marked a tentative destalinisation of industry: the ex-peasant labour force had been broken in, and dictatorial authority seemed a poor method of encouraging output. From now on responsibility for agreements on wages and conditions would lie with the sovnarkhozy and the regional union committees. In 1958 factory committees composed of union and management representatives even began to participate in drafting the annual plans, and they had to give permission before workers could be sacked.

As enterprises and regions were given slightly more official autonomy, they bid against each other and wages slowly rose. Meanwhile economic development allowed workers longer holidays and a shorter working week. Capitalist exploitation was still expanding the reproduction of "relative" surplus-value. In other words, changes in the productive forces meant that workers could reproduce their own intake of consumer goods in a shorter time. This meant that they spent more time producing surplus-value, and the working day could even be reduced. In fact, during this period workers were more likely to win disputes over holidays than over wages (28). But the majority of regulated disputes in this period arose from workers' efforts to challenge management illegality. Most of these were settled quickly at enterprise level according to the new procedures. We mention these regulated disputes in order to describe the background to the more famous but less frequent strikes and riots of the time.

STRIKES AND REVOLTS, 1945-64

1946-56: strikes and risings in the camps: Vorkuta, Pechora, Norilsk, Kolyma, Karaganda, Ekibastuz, Kengir, Salekhard, Nizhni-Aturyakh,...
1947: troop mutinies in Frankfurt-on-Oder & in Hungary.

CONT./...

STRIKES AND REVOLTS, 1945-64 (cont.)

1948-51: troop mutinies in East Germany & on ships in Baltic fleet.
1953: defections to insurgents, East Germany.
1955: mutiny, Weimar.
1956: riots in Tbilisi; strike wave in Sverdlovsk.
1959: Temirtau revolt.
1960: Strike in Kemerovo.
1961-62: strike wave: Alexandrov, Minsk, Kemerovo, Moscow region, Donetz Basin.
1962 Insurrection in Novocherkassk.
1963: disturbances in Krivoi Rog, Odessa, Ryazan, Baku, Omsk.

The earliest reported incident of serious labour unrest took place in 1959 in the new industrial town of Temirtau, in Kazakhstan. Young workers and Komsomol volunteers had been brought in from other parts of the country to help build a metal works. When they arrived, they found they had to live in tents (in an area exposed to furious sandstorms), that the supply of drinking water was only intermittent, and the food very poor. And what was more, young Party people from Poland and East Germany working alongside them were being much better paid. A group of workers set fire to the site canteen, marched on the police-station, caught the chief cop and hanged him. They also killed the site director. Soldiers were flown in, but they soon fraternised with the rebels. One report describes how the rioters then built barricades and took over the entire town. Special KGB troops had to be used to quell the riots. At least several dozen people were killed there and then, and others were executed afterwards.

Similar demonstrations occurred in Kemerovo, the centre of the Kuznets basin, an industrial area of Siberia, in January 1960. In 1961 and 1962, as the nomenklatura system was proving too strong for Khrushchev, and the Cold War with the US was reaching its peak, whatever decentralisation of "planning" had followed the sovnarkhoz reforms was put into reverse. A currency reform provoked strikes in 1961 in several towns across the country. In Alexandrovsk trouble broke out when a workers' delegation was sent to a police-station after a worker had been killed inside. After shots were fired at the crowd, the police-station was stormed and burnt to the ground. Workers then swarmed to the local prison where party bureaucrats had taken refuge, and demanded the liberation of their comrades. The gates opened and armed troops poured out, but soo, not being militiamen, MVD or KGB, they were mingling with the crowd. After they had withdrawn to the prison without having fired a single shot except into the air, new troops were called in from outside the area: these were men from the Special Intervention Division of the KGB, and only the officers were Russian. They had no qualms about shooting into the crowd. Dozens were shot or crushed. For days the KGB occupied the town. Some of the arrestees "disappeared", but three people were tried and shot: the local factory director, a doctor, and an artist!

In the first 6 months of 1962, 47000 workers took part in strikes, according to an official Soviet journal. But the biggest and most widespread explosion of proletarian discontent occurred when the government raised meat and dairy prices by about a third on June 1st. There followed sit-down strikes, factory protests, street demonstrations, and in many parts of the USSR, large-scale rioting. Unrest was reported in Grosny, Krasnodar, Yaroslav, Gorky, Zhdanov, Krivoi-Rog, Dneprodzerzhinsk, Odessa, and even Moscow, where there was a mass meeting at the Moskvich car factory. The most serious trouble took place in Novocherkassk, in the heavy industrial region of the Donets basin, where there erupted what was the biggest workers' uprising since Kronstadt in 1921.

Events in Novocherkassk took a radical turn when the management of an electric locomotive works raised the piecework norms by 30% just as the government was raising food prices. Workers from two of the workshops asked to see the director, but no-one would meet them. Another source says that the director did meet them, and when they asked him what they were supposed to live on, replied, "You're used to guzzling meat pies -- put jam in them instead." This budding Marie Antoinette and his retinue were lucky to escape in one piece. Workers from other shops gathered round. A passing train was stopped and the track of the main Moscow-to-Rostov

line was ripped up. All workers downed tools and draped the factory with posters reading "Down with Khrushchev!" and "Cut up Khrushchev for sausage-meat!" The militia arrived, but were soon driven off. Tanks and armoured cars then occupied the workshops, but the crowds refused to disperse. Thirty ringleaders were arrested during the night. The next morning, workers decided to march to the town centre. Some carried peaceful slogans (!) and pictures of Lenin (!!). They marched past some tanks, across a main bridge and into the town, by which time crowds of women and students had already gathered before the Party headquarters, and people were taking over lorries to use as platforms for speeches. After an attempt to smash into the police-station, the crowd returned to the party building and found it empty. Troops guarded the post office, the radio station and the bank, and tanks soon confronted the crowd outside the party offices. After local troops had refused to fire, and one army officer had reputedly torn up his party card and shot himself, non-Russian troops shot over the heads of the crowd, killing some small boys in nearby trees. The crowd went wild, and troops pumped dum-dum bullets into its midst, before being replaced with units armed only with ordinary rounds. At least 70 people were killed; some accounts spoke of hundreds dead. Three very senior Party people flew in; Kozlov was supposed to have wept when disclaiming responsibility for shooting the children. Use of dum-dum bullets was denied; it was all said to be a rumour spread by enemies of the State. No promises were made, but food was rushed into the shops, which were soon better stocked than any others outside Moscow. The wounded all "disappeared", and their families were shipped off to Siberia, as were many who had been filmed taking part in the rioting. Some accounts suggest that the Donbas strike movement had set up a regional strike committee to coordinate action in Rostov, Lugansk, Taganrog and elsewhere, but that the committee was pre-empted by the insurrection.

The "lessons" of this wave of unrest are many. First, nothing was more natural than for Soviet workers to see themselves as being in a total relationship with their employers, and when violence was used it tended to hit the right targets. Second, the speed with which the State employed extreme levels of violence surpassed anything seen in urban riots in, say, France or Britain for a very long time. Recuperative machinery was extremely underdeveloped. The authorities had not experienced mass "civil unrest" for a generation. Third, locally-based soldiers would not shoot proletarians who worked or studied locally, but KGB units and troops of other nationalities were more likely to do so. Fourth, although reports state that some of the Novocherkassk rebels returned fire, the strikers as a movement did not use firearms on a large scale. Fifth, the uprisings did not spread. Part of this may have been due to the news blackout; people in Moscow only heard about the Novocherkassk revolt several weeks after it was all over.

CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE BREZHNEV PERIOD: 1964-80

During its first four years in power (1964-68), the Brezhnev-Kosygin leadership courted popularity and pursued a much more generous wages policy than Khrushchev had done. Only three incidents of large-scale unrest were reported, all in 1967: strikes in Kharkov and the Gorky tractor-plant, and a riot in Priuluk. "Only" one person was certain to have been killed in any of these three conflicts, and so they cannot be likened to the bloodbaths of 1959-62.

The Priuluk riot of 1967 started after a worker was arrested and killed by the police. The funeral procession filed past the police-station where the killing took place, and several women shouted "Down with the Soviet SS men." The crowd sacked the police-station, and several cops were beaten up. Some reports say that cops were lynched too. An army brigade was sent into the town, but it was driven away by workers from several factories. Later a letter was written to the Central Committee of the CPSU demanding that the cops guilty of murder be handed over to be lynched, that 5 arrestees be freed, and that all party and council administrators in the town be sacked. The threat was made to set fire to a main oil pipeline running through the town if the army intervened again. One

account says that a general then arrived from Moscow and promised to meet all the demands except the handing-over of the cops, who would be tried in the courts instead. Another account says that the arrestees guilty of lynching cops would be kept in custody.

STRIKES AND RIOTS, 1964-82

1967: strikes in Kharkov and Gorky; riot in Priuluk.
1969: riots at Togliatti training-camps.
1969: strikes at Vyshgorod, Sverdlovsk, Gorky and a Kiev HEP station.
1970: strikes in Kaliningrad, Lvov and in Byelorússia.
1971 : strikes in Cherginov and Kopeiske.
1972: revolt in Dneprodzerzhinsk; oilworkers' protest in Baku.
Early 1970s: a number of stoppages by construction workers in Moscow and Leningrad; some strikes in Sverdlovsk and Vladimir.
1973: strike at a machine-building factory in Kiev.
1973: strikes reported in Vytebsk, Kaunas, Moscow and Leningrad.
1975: mutiny on the Storvecoi destroyer.
1976: strike wave : strikes in the Baltic region, the Donbas, the Caucasus, Byelorussia, the Volga region, Kazakhstan, Siberia, Dneprodzerzhinsk, Dnepropetrovsk, Riga, Lvov, Kiev and Rostov-on-Don.
1977: strikes in Yaroslav and Kauna.
1978, 1979 and 1980: bus-drivers' strikes in Togliatti.
1979: strike in Leningrad.
1979-81: strike wave : RSFSR: strikes in the Leninets factory, Leningrad, a porcelain factory, Michekevsk-Usolski, in the mines of Novokuznetsk and Vorkuta; bus-strikes in Monchegorsk (5 times) and Togliatti, strikes in car factories in Togliatti, Gorky and Pavlovsk. Ukraine: strikes in the Kiev region in early 1981 at 2 factories and a construction yard, followed by troubles over shortages; Baltic republics: several strikes in Vilnius, Tartu, Kaunas and Riga. Strikes by miners in Komis and Kuzbas areas. Other strikes also reported, in Pavlovsk, Nikel, Vyborg,etc.

In the 1970s a pattern began to emerge as follows: 1) individualised conflicts continued with quite a degree of resilience; and 2) collective conflicts flared up in a minority of workplaces, and became established as a useful weapon, although such conflicts never reached the earlier levels of violence. Over the decade as a whole, the main forms of workers' struggle were, firstly, turnover, pilfering, drinking and absenteeism, and then, occurring with less frequency, go-slows, silent sit-ins and strikes.

Voluntary turnover mainly involves people under the age of 30. As they pass this age, many become more oriented towards "making something of themselves", either by becoming "good" activist workers, or by making some money on the black market (30). The turnover rate for the 1970s was approximately 20% per year, with an average interim between jobs of 4 weeks. This gives us a figure for "frictional unemployment" of about 2%. There were in fact significant variations according to industry, geographical area, and size of enterprise. For instance, in 1971 the turnover rate in coalmining was 47%, and in textiles it was 65%. Turnover was particularly high in Tadzhikistan, Siberia and the Far East, but low in the central regions of the RSFSR. In analysing why workers change jobs, it should always be remembered that it is the enterprise that often provides accommodation, nurseries, cafeterias and holidays; in other words, enterprise services amount to a sort of "semi-social" wage. Turnover, therefore,was highest in small enterprises, because such enterprises, usually run by local councils, have a narrower range of services than that offered by larger firms, as well as fewer promotion opportunities. Nevertheless, auxiliary unskilled personnel, who exist in large numbers in the archetypally backward huge Soviet plants, often have restricted access to resources, and are prone to switch jobs for this reason, often accepting lower individual wages. They also leave jobs in order to find lighter and less hazardous work elsewhere.

A growing group within the Soviet working class during the 1970s was that of the shabashniks, or freelance construction workers, who move from site to site and often have their own shady ways of obtaining materials. They are responsible for a large portion of rural construction, and probably not a few of them are excluded from turnover figures because they are supposed to be holding down jobs on collective farms. There are also the "vagabonds", who live by casual work, often in the highly shady timber industry, and are sometimes on the run from the police. Turnover for these two groups of workers can hardly be considered voluntary, which only goes to show that the practice and class composition of the working class are the product of a two-way struggle.

Pilfering from work continued to be a popular pastime in the 1970s. An academic once wrote that "a little larceny can do a lot to improve employee morale", but more recently Tatyana Zaslavskaya has bemoaned how older generations of workers have a "spiritual influence" on their younger workmates, turning theft into part of labour culture. Drinking, too, is unquestionably part of working class life in the USSR to a much greater degree than in most other countries. Often workers use drink to have a good time whilst not bothering at all about the quality of their work, and there is an obvious link between drinking and absenteeism. But just as alcoholism is a form of drug addiction whose unpleasant effects on proletarians and their friends and families need no elaboration, so does alcoholism at work cause a deterioration of general safety standards.

Pilfering, drinking and absenteeism continued to contribute to the indiscipline endemic to the Soviet economy, despite such indiscipline being the most common reason for workers to be given the sack. We shall have more to say on these forms of activity when we come to consider how struggle might develop in the future.

As the regime began to aim for lower wage-growth in the years following 1969, collectively-organised forms of struggle reappeared on a large scale. Informal go-slows became very popular, especially just before output norms were revised. Another method of workplace struggle was to pressurise foremen by collectively organising sabotage. Broken machines would be repaired, or spare parts retrieved, if and when workers received extra bonus-payments. A third form of action was the "Italian strike": workers would clock in but refuse to work (31). In some workshops in Leningrad, about 400 workers used this form of action to protest against the treatment of prisoners who worked in the factory during the day. Another "Italian strike" took place in a Moscow cement works after the director reorganised work schedules without consulting the union committee. Workers opened their pay-packets to find that they were being paid a mere 20 roubles for a fortnight's work. For two days they sat around at work, doing nothing. They demanded to see the director, but he was to terrified to meet them face to face. Instead, the secretary of the local Party committe arrived, promised to loosen the production standards, and the strike ended. Afterwards, they tried to get the director to pay them for the days when they had been on strike. It is not known whether or not they were successful, but what is certain is that all the strikers were subsequently forced to leave the plant.

Along with these actions, strikes increased in frequency after 1969. Thirty were recorded between 1969 and 1978, and the real figure must have been much higher. Whilst workers tended, with a few exceptions, as we shall see, not to rush into violent confrontations, the authorities tended to grant concessions more easily.

Several strikes broke out in 1969. Workers at a Sverdlovsk rubber-plant struck against a 25% drop in salary resulting from the introduction of new norms and a 5-day week. Another factor was the shortage of meat and dairy products. Sverdlovsk workers demanded equal rationing, claiming that at least that way everyone would get the same amount. At a hydroelectric station in Vyshgorod, near Kiev, a strike broke out on the question of housing. Many of the workers were living in prefabricated huts, and the houses on the temporary workers' settlement were subject to general neglect. Barracks walls were cracking, and some houses were unfit for human habitation. Workers called a mass meeting and sent delegates to the Council of Ministers in Moscow. Soon

repair work started on some of the houses. But government bureaucrats then visited the settlement and demanded the election of a new housing committee to replace the one the workers had elected, which had not received management approval. A few scabs elected a new committee in the presence of troops. When the local authorities called a residents' meeting, workers started to raise complaints about how they had been refused internal passports, and made noises about corruption in housing allocation. A colonel from the MVD promised that workers would be given permanent housing, but at a second meeting this promise was withdrawn. Police tried to arrest the workers' delegates but were prevented from doing so. The final result of this struggle is not known.

In Krasnodar, also in 1969, workers from several factories stayed at home for three days, refusing to go to work until decent consumer goods and foodstuffs arrived in the stores. Later in the same year, women at a Gorky arms factory walked off the job, stating that they were going to buy meat and would not return until they had bought enough of it. This year also saw a premediatated riot at some "training-camps" (borstal centres) in Togliatti. Inmates prepared for revolt by stockpiling Molotov cocktails and filling fire-extinguishers with petrol. They used a tractor to brak from one camp into the other, and soon two camps were set alight. Trusties who had tried to put out the fire were killed or beaten up. Rebels freed their comrades from the isolator block after screws had tried to let it burn with the prisoners still inside. One screw was killed. Armoured cars and a helicopter arrived, but the order from Moscow was only to shoot those trying to escape. No-one tried... When the fires went out in the morning, only ashes remained, and no-one could stop the ringleaders being picked out and given a heavy beating. A few weeks later, prisoners set light to a camp near the Kryai railway junction. Afterwards, an amnesty was declared. Only later did the authorities name the insurgents who had been shot.

According to a single account, the Hsinhua Press Service in Peking (!), Soviet workers launched solidarity strikes to express their support for the December 1970 revolt of the Polish workers on the Baltic coasts. Supposedly these strikes took place in Kaliningrad, Lvov, and in some cities of Byelorussia. If this is true it is of major significance.

In December 1971, some 200 workers at a Baku oil refinery met to protest against substandard working conditions and to demand extra money and holidays. Three hours before the meeting took place, the authorities tried unsuccessfully to force its cancellation by arresting 13 workers for organising the protest. Those arrested were later imprisoned on charges of anti-Soviet activity.

An incident involving the militia sparked off a riot in Dneprodzerzhinsk in June 1972. Militiamen had arrested a few drunken members of a wedding party and driven them off in a wagon. Minutes later the wagon crashed. The militiamen, who had themselves been drinking, concentrated on saving themselves, leaving those they had arrested to burn to death when the wagon exploded. A crowd assembled, marched to the city's central police-station and ransacked it. Police files were burnt. They then marched on the Party headquarters and attacked it after being told to disperse. Thereupon two militia battalions opened fire. Eight insurgents were killed by the militia and two militiamen were themselves killed. This is an example, once again, of poor crowd control leading to a furious and immediately understood breach between the proletariat and the State. No such major riot (as far as we know) would occur on Soviet territory again until 1986.

In February 1973 a strike occurred at the largest factory in Vytebsk after the introduction of new norms for skilled workers had led to a 20% wage-cut. The strike lasted for two days until the KGB ordered the factory director to restore the wages. The KGB apparently tried to track down the instigators of the strike, but could find none.

In Kiev, a strike broke out in May 1973 at the city's largest machine-building factory. The factory was located on a major highway, and was therefore politically strategic. As soon as the workers stopped work, at 11 a.m., the factory director telephoned the Central Committee of the Ukrainian CP (CPU). By noon a member of the CPU politburo arrived at the factory, met a delegation

of workers, and promptly gave in to their demands for higher pay. By 3 p.m. the workers were told that their wages would be increased, and most of the top administrators of the factory would be dismissed. According to one report, the local population attributed the success of the strike to its high degree of organisation, and to the régime's fear that it might develop into a "Ukrainian Szczecin", (Szczecin was one of the cities where Polish workers rebelled in December 1970; according to Henri Simon, struggle there reached the point of urban guerrilla warfare).

In the same year, scores of strikes were reported on construction sites in Moscow and Leningrad. More information is available about a strike at a woodworking plant in Kaunas (Lithuania). Both day and night shifts struck over a cut in wages. Security agents and various Kaunas officials tried unsuccessfully to cajole the workers back to work. On October 4th the old wage-rates were restored, and the workers returned to their jobs.

In 1975 construction workers on the Baikal-Amur Railway walked out over poor organisation of the work plan. Further details are unavailable. Dockworkers went on strike in Riga in May 1976, protesting against food shortages in local shops. Four people were imprisoned. An account published by French anarchists (32) describes a wave of strikes in 1976 against food shortages, involving workers in the Baltic republics, the Ukraine, the Donets basin, the Caucasus, Byelorussia, the Volga region, Kazakhstan and Siberia. The same account states that women in Rostov-on-Don broke the windows of shops whose shelves were bare. (Why they should want to do that is not certain, and it is possible that this account is exaggerated. It should be clear that our own aim in giving this long list of strikes is not to overstate their significance, but to describe the mechanisms involved.)

In Yaroslav in 1977 proletarians besieged local refrigeration depots which stored meat even when there was none in the local shops. Police killed thirteen people. In December of the same year, workers struck at the Kaunas rubber goods factory after management effectively reduced wages -- with union consent-- by decreasing the admissible rate of spoiled goods. The first shift in the shoe-moulding shop refused to work at all, and the second shift walked out for four hours. State security officials confronted the workers verbally, and one worker was beaten during a militia interrogation, but the spoilage rate was restored. A shift foreman was fired, a senior technician suspended, and the chief engineer severly reprimanded after the strike.

In August 1979, bus-drivers went on strike in Togliatti. They blocked the depot gates with a big articulated bus to stop scabs from driving out any of the 200 buses inside, and presented management with a list of 15 demands. These included a wage-rise, the sacking of a particularly detested boss, and a threat that if one striker was arrested after they returned to work, they would immediately go back out on strike. Management, union and party officials tried to persuade them to end the strike before discussing their demands. The strikers refused. Scabs were sent in, telling the drivers to get out of "their" vehicles. Two scabs were beaten up, but despite this, two strikers were freed by the militia. Thousands of workers at the Volga car factory were unable to get to work because of the strike. As rumours reached them about what was going on, and millions of roubles of lost production went down the drain, the bosses gave in and met the strikers' main demands. No immediate retribution followed, but one source suggests that an arrest of strike organisers occurred some months later, directly or indirectly precipitating the disturbance in Togliatti the following year.

THE STRIKE WAVE OF 1980-81

If collective workplace struggles had occurred increasingly frequently in the 1970s, the years 1980-81 saw a veritable wave of strikes. The influence of the movement in Poland on events in the USSR remains an unknown factor.

The movement began in a town we have already mentioned: Togliatti. In May 1980 an unknown number of bus drivers struck in protest against being

assigned extra routes without additional money. They were joined by 70 000 assembly-line workers at the Togliatti car plant, one of the biggest factories in the world. The car workers live in large housing developments 10 miles from the factory, and depend upon the bus-drivers for transportation. During the 1979 strike some of them managed to devise their own transportation. In 1980, angered by shortages of food (especially meat and dairy products), they joined the drivers. One Soviet source told the New York Times that "an unofficial worker leadership" at the plant had become more powerful than the union, and was instrumental in organising the strike. According to this source, this unofficial leadership had already protested against unsatisfactory working conditions and had supported several previous 30-minute stoppages. Soviet authorities moved quickly to restore order, stocking local stores with large amounts of food and consumer goods. Sustained workplace militancy at the Togliatti plant led to the installation of "some of the best social and medical facilities" in the USSR.

The Togliatti drivers had walked out on May 6-7. On May 7-8, several thousand assembly-line workers walked out of the Gorky motor plant, builder of trucks and other vehicles, in protest against local food shortages. Handwritten pamphlets listing complaints had appeared in April. Food supplies improved in the town immediately after the strike, but four strike leaders were arrested.

In June 1980, following the departure of politburo member Kirilenko, who had asked them to work harder, employees of the Kama River truck plant struck for four hours in protest over food shortages. Like the Togliatti car plant, this is also one of the biggest workplaces in the world.

On October 1-2, 1980, about 1000 workers struck at the Katseremonditehas tractor factory in Tartu (Estonia), demanding the withdrawal of recently-revised norms, payment of increased bonuses, and the elimination of food shortages in local shops. A special commission sent from Moscow quickly met the first two demands. The success of the Tartu strikers reportedly encouraged demonstrations in both Tartu and Parnu on October 10 on behalf of Estonian independence and other nationalist causes. The Kremlin élite must have been pleased with such rapid ideological recuperation.

Also in 1980, although precise dates are uncertain, one strike is reported to have taken place in Nikel, and a second took place in Vyborg. In the latter strike, workers protested police brutality in a previous incident. In the same year, workers at a Chelyabinsk tractor factory struck against food shortages.

The trouble continued into 1981. In early 1981, coalminers came out on strike in Vorkuta. In late March and early April, two strikes occurred at a machine design plant in Kiev. The first strike was precipitated by an increase in production norms amounting to a cut in wages. The strike was successful. The issue in the second conflict was the unavailability of water in the area where the plant is located. Unusually, the organisers were reported to have been members of the party and union committees of the factory. This strike too was victorious -- the water system was soon repaired. However, the plant director was fired, and changes were made in the party and union committees. During the same period, there was a strike elsewhere in Kiev, at a factory producing reinforced concrete elements. Again the issue was an increase in production norms. Again the conflict was settled in favour of the workers.

In August 1981, workers struck at a Kiev motorcycle plant for one or two days to protest against reductions in piece-rates and bonuses. The earlier rates were restored and workers went back to their jobs. Also in 1981, labour stoppages are reported to have occurred in Riga and various parts of Lithuania. There were also reports that 500 workers on two shifts at the Zhdanov bus factory in Pavlovsk (Leningrad region) struck for better conditions. Similar walkouts have occurred in other Pavlovsk factories in recent years, and the workers' demands have usually been granted. The PAZ car works in particular experienced a series of strikes. Since December 1981 it has been impossible for management to identify the "leaders" (33). Other strikes reported during the 1979-81 period include a miners' strike in Novokuznetsk, repeated bus strikes in Monchegorsk, and a stoppage at a porcelain factory in Michelevsk-Usolski. There were also strikes in the Komis and Kuzbas mines, and two strikes in a fortnight at the Dzhimask construction yard in Kiev.

We have shown how the strike wave of 1980-81 followed on from a decade where strikes had become more frequent, less violently confronted and less violent in their own dynamic, and usually more successful than in the previous period. This seems to have come to a peak in 1980-81. We feel confident about referring to a "wave" of strikes, firstly because of the sheer number of them, and secondly because several of them were clearly not isolated occurrences, and were influenced by strikes in other workplaces. In Togliatti in 1979-80 and in Kiev and Pavlovsk in 1981, one disturbance followed upon another, in more than one workplace (33).

When Mikhail Holubenko analysed Soviet working class opposition up to the year 1973 (34), he noted that strikes occurred most often in outlying areas, that is, in areas removed from the central Moscow-Leningrad region. Two of the main reasons for this are that the peripheral regions suffer more from shortages of all kinds, and that control by police and security services is much tighter in big cities and major industrial centres. The rulers know, as we know, that whereas an all-out strike in Magadan would be of little effect, an all-out general strike in Moscow would rock the world, and nothing in the USSR would ever be quite the same again. The movements in Kiev and Togliatti were, like the strike wave of which they were part, a step in the right direction, and this was unmistakably shown by the unilateral concessions won from the bosses. The second major strength of the movement was that workers' demands focussed on food shortages and not merely on labour matters such as pay and norms. In the past, such demands have lit the touch-paper of revolutionary movements.

The regime's fear during 1980-81 was perhaps best expressed by its publicly broadcast line on "workers' problems". From mid-1980 to late 1981 there was a press campaign to expose the shortcomings of union officials in listening to complaints and pressing for workers' interests. Brezhnev himself spoke out. After late 1981 this campaign subsided, and back came the traditional emphasis on raising productivity. This provided a neat parallel with coverage of the workers' movement in Poland. The initial wildcat strikes of July were ignored in the Soviet press, which only began to give selective coverage to the Polish unrest in mid-August. After mid-September 1981, however, there was an extensive anti-Solidarnosc campaign. By November the main Soviet literary journal was calling Solidarnosc leaders "fascists". The regime was far less likely to have been concerned with whipping up support for a possible invasion than with preventing an adverse effect on struggles "at home". According to two sources, there was already agitation in several Soviet factories in support of Gdansk workers. Just how far were we from a Gdansk in Kiev or Togliatti?

MODERN-DAY REVOLUTIONARIES IN THE USSR

In Leningrad in 1976 there appeared a group of students known as the Left Opposition (35). The name was significant in itself: the Russian word oppozitsiya is far stronger than its English equivalent, and implies anti-constitutionalism at the very least. This group distributed leaflets against the CPSU's 25th Congress, ending with the words "Long live the new revolution! Long live communism!" One student was sentenced to two years in a camp for "instigating" the action. In June 1978, his comrade Alexander Skobov set up a "community" in Leningrad where sympathisers and young marginals could meet each other. The group published 3 editions of a review which, alongside "classical" texts, contained some new articles of an informative or theoretical nature.

One of the principal projects of the Left Opposition was to hold a conference of a number of left groups from Leningrad, Moscow, the Ukraine, the Caucasus and the Baltic states. The aim was to argue and get organised. The conference was put back because of the attitude taken by an "orthodox Marxist" group, but in fact it was never to take place, beacuse delegates were arrested as soon as they arrived in Leningrad. One comrade from Moscow was put straight into custody. The community's base was searched and ransacked, and in October

Skobov was interrogated by the KGB. After this, people close to the community were subject to searches and interrogation. Skobov was soon arrested, as was Tsurkov, a "veteran" from 1976. A demonstration against the arrests was held by more than 200 students in central Leningrad in December. But the harassment continued: Reznikov was attacked by unknown assailants, and arrested more than once. In April 1979, Arkady Tsurkov was given 5 years hard labour, and Skobov was hospitalised indefinitely in a mental asylum. In August, another member of the group, Alexis Khavin, was sentenced to 6 years for trafficking in drugs, after what could have been a police plant, given that Khavin had refused to grass on Skobov. The repression against Skobov's community and the Left Opposition was thus successful by 1979.

So, what were the politics of the Left Opposition? First it must be put into the context of the Leningrad "radical" scene. Since the early 1970s, Leningrad had been home to a movement of young people living in communes. There were other communes, mainly in other university cities, but the movement was most developed in Leningrad. These communes formed a support network, which could, for example, give hitch-hikers somewhere to stay. Within the movement there were several tendencies: Marxist, anarchist, Trotskyist. Although the general tendency was towards anarchism, the movement was heavily influenced by "modern" thought of the kind put out by Marcuse. The Left Opposition appeared within this milieu, with ideas that were, generally speaking, "ultra-leftist". Meanwhile, one faction of the group was heavily influenced by anarchism. The group's review, Perspectives, contained orientation texts from various points of view. "Classics" by Trotsky, Bakunin and Kropotkin were mingled with "modern" texts by Marcuse and Cohn-Bendit. Other texts criticised or defended the Kronstadt revolt. There were also programmatic texts and articles taken from other samizdat publications. Some contributors referred approvingly to Kropotkin and Bakunin. Articles pronounced in favour of illegalism and violent action, counterfeiting and the eventual seizure of hostages and launch of armed struggle inspired by "West German anarchists, especially the Baader-Meinhof Group". Skobov defined himself as an anarcho-socialist and partisan of the young Marx. In the group's library there were works by Trotsky, the young Marx, Kropotkin and Soviet dissidents. Skobov, along with Khavin, belonged to the non-violent tendency which wanted to continue to act above-ground whilst rejecting sectarianism. Khavin had already been imprisoned in 1977 for distributing works by Kropotkin when he was still at school.

During the same period, the Revolutionary Communards also arose from the same milieu in Leningrad, but unlike the Left Opposition, they were clandestine from the very beginning. For this reason, not a lot about them is known. But what is a fact is that clandestinity helped them for a time to resist the sort of repression that had broken the Left Opposition. However, by 1981 some of them had been arrested for handing out leaflets, and three of their cells had to be dispersed. At that time they were seeking contact with similar Western groups, and they are rumoured to still exist.

In May 1978 the Revolutionary Communards helped organise an anti-war demonstration on Nevsky Prospekt, a main thoroughfare in Leningrad. In the same year, in collaboration with the Left Opposition, they held a fake course on "Diamat" ("Dialectical materialism", the official name for a course of political brainwashing) at Leningrad University. In front of 300 people several students spoke of Bakunin, Trotsky and others. The Revolutionary Communards also published numerous leaflets.

In October 1979, three members of the group were arrested for having written slogans and pasted posters on walls. The slogans read "Democracy not demagogy"(ugh!) and "Down with State capitalism". The posters demanded "Simply an anti-authoritarian order" and defined the enemy as "the family, private property and the State". The posters were signed by the "Movement of Revolutionary Communards". All three people arrested were sentenced in December 1979 to imprisonment in strict-régime camps. One was a mechanic in a refrigerator factory; another was a musician, poet and painter. Police searches of their home netted works by Bebel, Kautsky, Marcuse, Fromm and the bourgeois-democratic "Chronicles of Current Events". In his trial, Alexei Stassevich spoke of

the Communards' solidarity with the French movement of 1968, and voiced the group's opinion that the commune was the basic cell of communist society. Vladimir Mikhailov ended by announcing that "Many things depend on the tribunal's decision, notably the form to be taken by the struggle we will carry out at a later date. As for the verdict, only history will give it." Alevtina Kotchneva, tongue-in-cheek, announced "I have never worked, I have abandoned my studies, I had no fixed abode. Never have I been useful to anyone -- I was happy being a 'consumer'. I have been thinking, and I assure the tribunal that I will completely change my lifestyle, that I will work and study. I will teach people to love each other. But first one must get rid of one's own faults. I know the court will give a fair judgement, but I would ask for a light sentence."

As we shall see below, the Revolutionary Communards, despite their reference to "democracy", cannot be likened to the current Soviet left. On the contrary, they should be seen as the most radical elements of what can only be called a "new left" insofar as it sought -- within specific historical conditions, in the Leningrad of the 1970s -- to reject the traditional left, without the aim of providing an equally capitalist alternative to it. The Soviet "new left" today is more comparable to the Greens than to the original Communards.

INDEPENDENT TRADE-UNIONISM : THE ROAD TO INSTITUTIONALISATION OR JUST MANIPULATION ?

The main organisation actively demanding the creation of an independent trade union is SMOT (the Free Inter-Professional Workers' Association), which already sees itself as such a union. Its official creation-myth chronicles how the founding members ran across each other in the waiting-rooms of the official TUC, the procuracy and the Supreme Soviet, whilst waiting to complain about illegalities they had suffered at their workplaces. They formed the Free Trade Union Association in February 1978, but following arrests, it was dissolved soon afterwards, and SMOT was founded in October of the same year. The most famous SMOT activist, Vladimir Klebanov, is a victimised Ukrainian mineworker who has been subjected to drug treatment in a series of psychiatric "hospitals".

FTUA announced, in typical Soviet dissident fashion, that it would welcome support from the leader of the American AFL-CIO, and would seek recognition from the ILO, the UN's labour organisation. SMOT's initial "Declaration" called for a representative "Workers'" union "independent of the State's power" to defend workers' rights under Soviet and international law. Wheareas the FTUA had claimed 200 members, SMOT claimed 100, in 8 separate groups. By 1981 its membership had risen to 200, and by mid-1982 it was claiming 300 members and 1500 supporters. One member, the now exiled Vladimir Borissov, an anarchosyndicalist who was once in contact with the Revolutionary Communards, asserted that since the existence of SMOT served to "partially defuse" workers' unrest, the government might not want to destroy it entirely. (This begs the question, of course, of why Borissov was and is a SMOT activist, but then anarchosyndicalists have a long history of defusing workers' unrest. Borissov now cooperates with the notoriously reactionary Fédération Anarchiste in France). In fact, as far as we are aware, SMOT did not try either to defuse or to exacerbate workers' struggles during the 1980-81 strike wave -- it simoly did not have the means. However, it did manage to issue a "Proclamation" in support of the Polish Catholic-nationalist union Solidarnosc.

By 1987 SMOT was circulating an appeal in several Soviet cities, calling for strikes in the event of the price-rises likely to be induced by perestroika. By that time it claimed 400 members, but none in the Donbas coalfields or elsewhere in the Ukraine, where alternative trade-unionism seemed strongest, albeit among a tiny minority, in the 1960s. Dissidents from the intelligentsia attacked the document as "demagogic". Such a reaction could have been predicted, for there is no love lost between the majority of the members of the intelligentsia and the majority of proletarians. Sakharov refused to support Klebanov's project in 1977 because some workers "did not understand the risks of open dissent", and Klebanov might not be committed to individual liberty. Klebanov said of the intelligentsia: "They consider themselves above us."

The future role of SMOT as an organisation to institutionalise workers'

struggles, thereby removing their anti-capitalist sting, is uncertain. We doubt very much, though, whether it will be able to stir up strikes so as to build up its own value to the regime at a later date, or whether it will ever be able to play the role of Guardian of the National Identity, as Solidarnosc undoubtedly does in contemporary Poland. On the other hand, the regime will eventually need some sort of "independent" workers' organisations, so as to regulate wage-labour in a more modern and market-oriented way, and SMOT is unlikely to disappear. Its strength will one day be directly proportional to the weakness of a workers' strike movement. To the extent that strikers feel the need to compromise and hold back from offensive proletarian unity, they will identify with trade-unionism, be it with SMOT or with a revamped and democratised version of the official unions.

In relation to SMOT, we shall mention one other factor that one day might prove to be very important. We have heard that in 1980 or 1981 it was effectively taken over by a sinister organisation called the NTS, or "Popular Labour Alliance". Founded in 1930, the NTS is a Russian Christian-democratic party, based in Frankfurt and London, which operates secret cells on Soviet territory. In World War 2 it recruited high-ranking officers of the Russian Liberation Army (ROA), a nationalist force which was originally pro-Nazi but ended up fighting both sides. After the war the NTS collaborated with secret British military operation behind the Soviet lines. It is known to have cooperated with the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) in the 1960s. Today it is a very broad organisation; although it is basically Christian or liberal-democratic, its members literally range from monarchists to Christian anarchists. It is the major political organisation among Soviet émigrés, and one theory about it is that it has been heavily inflitrated by the KGB. We have heard that it offered arms to the Solidarnosc leadership in 1981 and would operate on a military level in a future crisis in the USSR. It is almost certainly connected with Russian nationalist groupings active in the "political vacuum" created by glasnost, and possibly with the Democratic Union. In our view it still works very closely with British intelligence. The more publicity its real operations are given, the less likely it is to be able to play a pernicious role in a future upheaval, which we can guarantee is what it will try to do (36).

THE PRE-CRISIS SITUATION

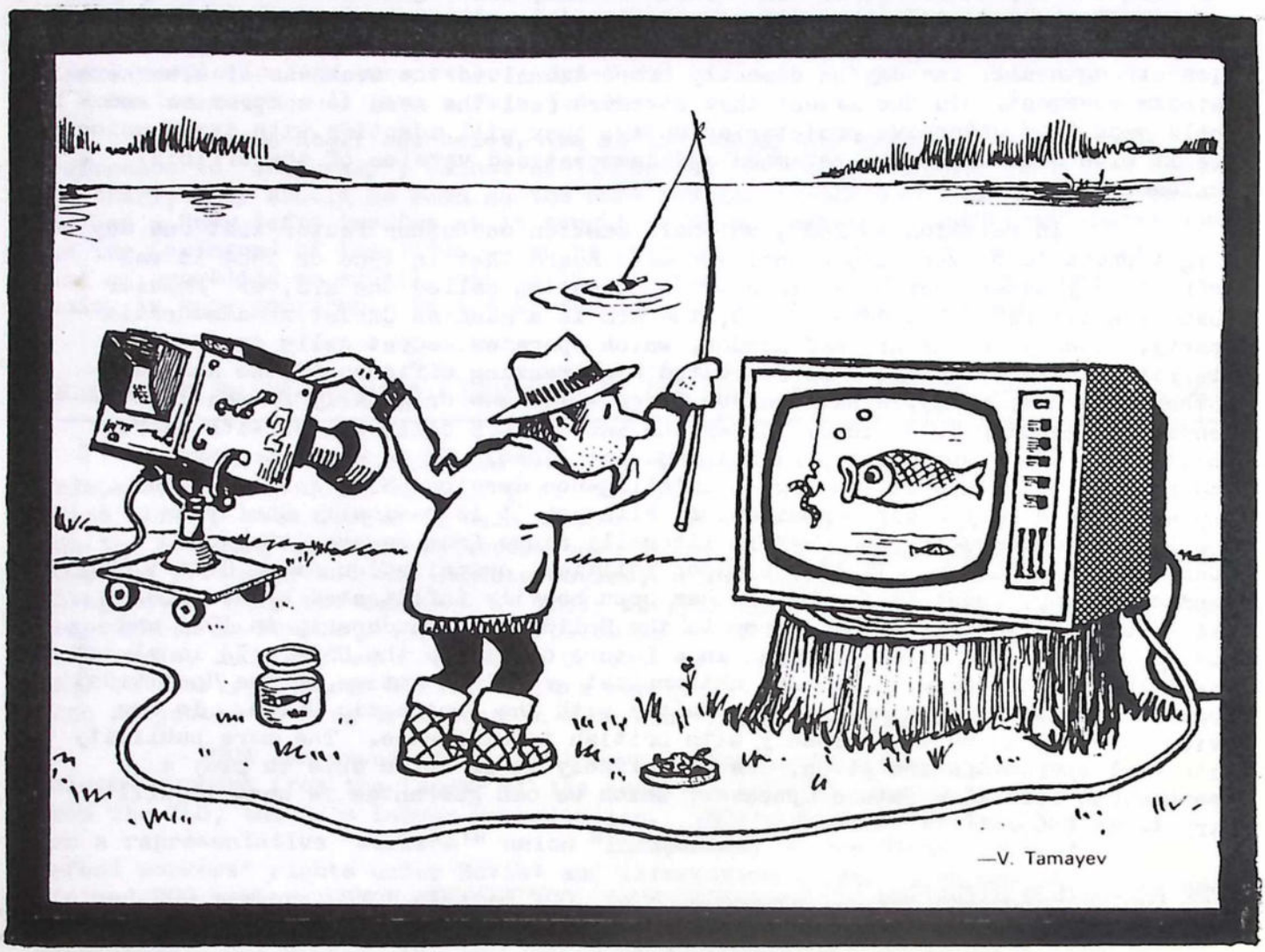
It is now accepted by virtually all top bureaucrats that the USSR was rapidly entering into a "pre-crisis situation" by the early 1980s. This, rather than any ideological conversion to "new economic thinking", is the fundamental reason for the introduction of perestroika.

When Brezhnev died in 1982 the technological gap with the more advanced economies of Japan and the West had reached chronic proportions. Whereas Western economies had improved energy conservation techniques after the oil shocks of 1974, and had made giant leaps forward in the fields of microelectronics, information technology and robotics, the Soviet economy was still a long way behind, as if stuck in a bygone era. Perhaps the best illustration of this is the fact that whereas the world production of steel was falling, due to a more efficient use of the steel actually consumed, Soviet production was rising, as output grew extensively but not intensively. There really did seem to be something wrong with the way Soviet "planners" measured success.

Secondly, after the invasion of Afghanistan and the election of Reagan in 1979, relations with the US soured. The Chinese invasion of Vietnam in the same year was another factor which made it seem as if Soviet military expenditure would demand an ever increasing proportion of the country's resources. This would be a drain on the rest of the economy if production continued with all the old problems of bureaucratic waste and inefficiency.

A third factor in the pre-crisis situation was the falling influence of the central Moscow elite over large parts of the country. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan

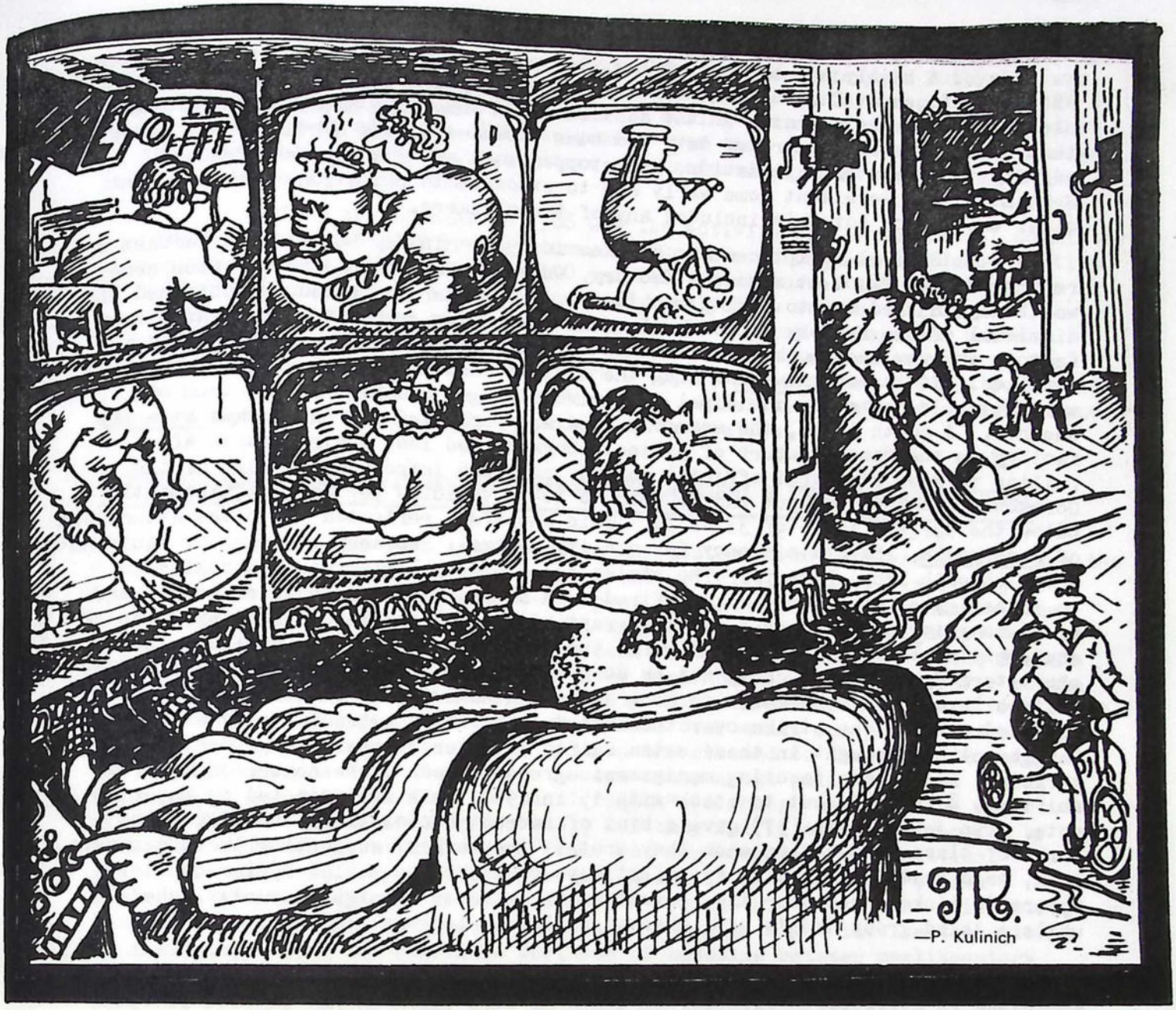
If cartoons like these are already part of the popular culture, how long will it be before Soviet subversives start sending us sophisticated critiques of the modern spectacle ?



had effectively become an area where a mafia economy prevailed. The falsification of figures for Uzbek cotton production corresponded to the de facto theft of billions of roubles from the central budget, which were used to oil the wheels of an economy where bribery and corruption were predominant, and the rulers squandered money on mansions and "pleasure palaces" without bothering about the republic's output at all. Similar circumstances prevailed in Kazakhstan, presided over by First Party Secretary Kunayev, who had the effrontery to sit on the Politburo. In Moscow too, although to a far lesser extent, corruption was dysfunctional to economic efficiency. Thus at the Politburo meeting to decide on a successor to Andropov, KGB chief Chebrikov demolished the character of Viktor Grishin, Moscow party chief, in a way that made it sound as if he were talking about Al Capone.

The fourth factor was the one that included all the others: economic stagnation. Economists now accept that the growth-rate from 1981 to 1983 was less than 1%, corresponding to zero productivity growth when we take account of population figures. Some Western analysts have even said that if we exclude oil and vodka production, there was no real growth between 1964 and 1982. If this is true, and for the later Brezhnev years (1975-82) it probably is, this means that productivity actually fell. This has various implications.

Firstly, falling productivity, in a country where the State owns as much capital as it does in the USSR, must mean a drastic shake-up of the system of



command, the internal organisation of management. Soviet trainees are not coming to the London Business School solely in order to learn about Anglo-Soviet trade! Secondly, what else does falling productivity mean but a workers' offensive in the struggle against capitalist-imposed work? This offensive necessitates a counter-offensive, a recomposition of the working class according to the modern needs of capitalist efficiency. The weapons include both carrot and stick -- or, as some have said in the Soviet context, both rouble and knout.

STRIKES SINCE 1982

Strikes subsided somewhat after 1981, probably as the "lessons of Poland" were assimilated by both sides. But they continued to occur. Workers went on strike in Vyborg in January 1983 when management did not have the cash available to pay wages. Panicking, they soon found some cash and handed it over. In the same year, even Izvestiya reported a strike in a car-park in Narva, although they avoided the word for strike and used the euphemism "buża" (row, disorder). In the summer of 1983 there were strikes and demonstrations in the Ukrainian town of Krivoi Rog, and in 1983-84 there was a strike at an arms factory in Sverdlovsk. In Georgia students at a teacher training college went on strike in December 1985. Under Gorbachev strikes seemed to become slightly more frequent. There was some kind of action by workers at the Kamaz truck

factory, east of Moscow, in December 1986, but details are unclear.

A highly significant strike took place in July 1986, in the aftermath of the meltdown at Chernobyl. Reservists were being drafted into doing stints cleaning up in the vicinity of the accident. In June some Estonians were told that their two-month tour of duty had been extended to six months. They gathered angrily to demand an explanation, and stopped work after a physical fracas. Some Estonians were sent home early due to exposure to radiation, but it is not clear whether or not this included any of the strikers.

Several workplaces saw strikes in 1987. In May Soviet TV broadcast a report of a conflict at a Moscow factory, where workers downed tools after someone was badly injured due to faulty machinery. The workers demanded and obtained the dismissal of the factory director. In June production ground to a halt at a bus factory in Lvov when workers demanded a wage-rise and an improvement in food supplies. It is not known how long the dispute lasted, but the workers' demands were met. In September municipal bus-drivers staged a strike in the town of Chekhov. A month later, the assembly line was paralysed for three days at a bus factory in the Moscow suburb of Likino. Workers had lost their bonuses after failing to meet stringent official quality controls introduced as part of the Gorbachev package. Output had dropped to 20-25 vehicles per day, significantly below the target fidure of 33 or 34. This shortfall reflected the close attentions of Gospryomka, the State agency for quality control. Workers blamed poor equipment and a chronic lack of parts. The strike ended when a magistrate was called in to investigate. The director was fired soon afterwards. The rumour is that the firm was going to be given a special grant of 800 000 roubles. Moreover, foreign equipment would come into operation at the plant in early 1988. Obviously such short-term "generosity" could not be so great if the strike rate rose to mid-1989 British levels ! In December workers at an engine-building plant in Yaroslavl launched a week-long strike over the introduction of 15 extra Saturday shifts. Management had brought in these extra shifts in order to meet new production targets. At a joint meeting management agreed to reduce the number of Saturday shifts to 8 in 1989, but to stick with 15 in 1988. This was accepted by majority vote. Two journalists (37) gave a hint of current sociological thinking about workers' class composition when they wrote: "One worker, supporting the management plan, said that those opting for eight days could not be called engine-builders. Opponents linked hopes for the restructuring drive to an eight-Saturday schedule, while a third group didn't mind when it worked as long as they got paid for it."

There were even more strikes in 1988. In February, savings bank employees in Novosibirsk refused to serve customers, demanding better conditions and more workspace. Management went some way to meeting their demands, and the strike ended after a day and a half. In Tallin in April, lathe operators struck over failure to have repairs carried out. Workers complained of union inaction. In May, bus and taxi drivers in Klaipeda struck over poor conditions. A new scheme had cut wages by up to 18 roubles per month, and many workers were receiving reduced bonus payments. The next day, strike-breakers were sent in from Vilnius, but eventually it was agreed that workers would receive the lost wages. (It is unclear whether this means wages at the new or the old rate,) Strikes broke out at the end of July in the town of Kamensk in the Urals. Assembly workers were protesting against management and a new wage system. Two shifts were out for two days before management began to "take their problems seriously". In an interesting development in July, workers from Kirovokan in Armenia sent a telegram to the Soviet TUC in Moscow demanding compensation for non-payment while fellow-workers were on strike over the authorities' refusal to allow the Armenian annexation of Nagorno-Karabakh. The TUC called the work stoppages "unlawful", and no payments were made. The following month in Tashkent, the local court dismissed appeals by 7 Crimean Tatars seeking reinstatement after being dismissed for taking part in a strike, presumably a nationalist one. These two examples show how nationalist conflicts based upon unity of workers and management (and intelligentsia) can sometimes turn into conflicts between workers and management. There were numerous nationalist strikes in non-Russian republics throughout 1988 and 1989, but of themselves they do not concern us in the present context.

In Archangel in September, post office van-drivers struck for five days. In the same month workers at the Novo-Kuibyshev textile factory in Kuibyshev went on strike for four hours. In October several factories in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, agreed to pay workers for time lost during nationalist strikes. Whether there was any great struggle with management over this issue is not known. However, in the same month several Crimean Tatars were refused reinstatement after taking part in nationalist activities.

Another development in 1988 was the activity of the unofficial Committee for the Democratisation of Trade Unions. In October it organised a demonstration in Leningrad which was attended by 400 people. It discussed the recent strike by boiler workers, set up a strike fund and resolved to support Solidarnosc. An organisation like this could have a major role to play if hardened union bureaucrats resist Gorbachev's desire to democratise the unions as part of the plan to free the labour market. The CDTU's paper, Rubikon, has already published letters of complaint about the TUC. This is a classical example of mediation and glasnost deterring autonomously organised confrontation.

DEMOCRATISATION AND CIVIL SOCIETY VERSUS THEIR ENEMY : PROLETARIAN AUTONOMY

Eastern European intellectuals and Western democrats are wont to see the Soviet reforms as a matter of the reappearance of civil society (or even just "society") as a non-antagonistic counterpart to the State. This nonsense comes from a simplistic understanding of civil society as meaning the right to associate in social or political groups constituted independently of the State's political structures. We prefer to use the term "civil society" to refer to the accepted framework for individuals' activity in all areas of life apart from State administration. Shoppers are expected to hand over money for goods, but really have a "grievance" about shortages; workers are allowed to demand a "fair day's pay"; people have a "right" to moan to each other about pollution, and so on. These might not take the form of "civil rights" (although we await the report of Chebrikov's legal reform commission), but they fulfil the same function by providing individuals with a common field for non-combative non-political activity. Civil society is about our "all being in the same boat", with "legitimate" needs and an "accepted" code of behaviour. Capitalist daily life, in other words. Gorbachev's democratisation campaign might involve the attempt to draw people into the obnoxious business of choosing between parliamentary candidates, i.e. the democratisation of the State. But it also concerns the official recognition of daily life in order to legitimise the State by reference to what supposedly lies outside it: the "people", the country.

Nowadays if Ivan Ivanovich thinks treatment at his hospital is atrocious, he is exhorted by Health Minister Chazov to understand the scale of the inefficiency in the Soviet NHS. If he wants to join a local "unofficial group" to campaign for the dismissal of the notoriously corrupt director of the local health authority, all's well and good -- it's good to see him doing his duty as a citizen. In fact this is not just a matter of citizenship, i.e. the political right to participate in managing one's own exploitation. It has more to do with "civil" rights, and is central to the attempted legitimation of the CPSU regime. Of course we accept that in our example an unofficial group might well function, among other things, as a means for proletarians to improve health provision. But we know that at the same time local marginals will prefer to obtain medicines from black market dealers, and they will sneer at Ivan Ivanovich's efforts. We use this example to illustrate the main problem facing the "subterranean maturation" of a future revolutionary movement in the USSR: how to distanciate itself both from modernised integration and from "old-style" circumvention. This problem affects struggles in various spheres, not least of which is the workplace. Democratised trade-unionism might well allow wage-increases for certain categories of workers, but we know how insipid its divisive and anti-escalatory nature can be. We know how it always assumes workers can only do well when the bosses are doing well too. But on the other hand, the absenteeism, drunkenness and sloppy work of the Soviet workforce, however admirable and

necessary they may be, must do without any exaggerated self-reliance. We were impressed by the Soviet workers who used sabotage to press collectively for increased bonuses. Here we have a linkage of action with demand that is subversive in its implications. The most important of these implications is that class struggle is not something to be invented, institutionalised or given rights. It exists because proletarians exist. The logic of its dynamic is both collective and extra-legal (or "autonomous"). This is really nothing other than a call for proletarian autonomy to become public.

For Gorbachev, the main problem is the working class, as we have tried to show by looking at the history of 20th century class struggle in the USSR. For the working class, the main problem in the next few years will be how to launch an offensive recomposition of the class without succumbing to institutionalisation. We are not all in the same boat.

[redacted]

FOOTONOTES

1) From here on I have refrained from using inverted commas around the word 'Soviet'. This is purely for the sake of readability; when referring to the'Soviet Union', no connection is implied with the insurgent soviets of 1905 and 1917.
2)For a general history of Russia, see L.Kochan and R.Abraham, The Making of Modern Russia, second edition, Penguin, 1983.
3) K.Wittfogel, Oriental Despotism: a comparative study of total power, Vintage Books, 1981 (first published 1957), p.202. There are a few interesting bits and pieces in this book, but the author concludes by calling upon the West to make use of a "new insight" to fight and win World War Three.
4) Ibid., pp.219ff.
5) K.Marx, Secret Diplomatic History of the 18thCentury, ed.L.Hutchinson, Lawrence and Wishart, 1969, published together with The Story of the Life of Lord Palmerston. Crucial reading, but very hard to get hold of. The former text is also included in K.Marx and F.Engels, The Russian Menace to Europe, ed. Paul W.Blackstock and Bert F.Hoselitz, Glencoe, Illinois, 1952. The original was published in part in the Sheffield Free Press (1856), and then in full in the Free Press (1856-57), which was owned by a Tory politician whose Russophobe views Marx saw as "objectively revolutionary" (!) Marx's own "Russophobia" is often used by leftists to obscure what he actually said about Russia. When they see only Lenin and his categories of "populism", "economism", "Marxism", etc., they conveniently forget that Marx explicitly supported the terrorist faction of populism and denied such support to the Russian so-called "Marxists", whom he called "defenders of capitalism". Guess which tendency gave rise to Lenin! See T.Shanin (ed.),Late Marx and the Russian Road, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983, p.13.
6) See B.Grancelli, Soviet Management and Labour Relations,Allen and Unwin, 1988, pp.7-8.
7) Ibid., p.20.
8) The films of Eisenstein are hardly an accurate description of the Russian working class. In 1900 the number of sales and clerical workers (2½-3million) was greater than the combined total of factory-workers and miners (2.4million). The former group tended to work at least three hours longer than the factory-workers' maximum of 11½ hours per day. See V.Bonnell (ed.), The Russian Worker: life and labor [sic] under the Tsarist régime, Univ.of California Press, 1983, pp.2, 194 and 198-201.
9) See L.Haimson, The Problem of Social Stability in Urban Russia, 1905-17, in Slavic Review XXIII, No.4, Dec.1964, pp.639ff.
10) Although of course we are not confusing the proletariat with the workers, the vast majority of proletarians in Russia at this time were workers, and not unwaged housewives, prisoners, long-term unemployed people, etc.
11) See the Scorcher Publications pamphlet, The Experience of the Factory Committees in the Russian Revolution, Cardiff, 1984, pp.11-19. This text has recently been translated into Farsi.*(Box 15,138 Kingsland High Road, London, E8 2NS).*
12) M.Brinton,The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control, Black and Red, 1972 (86pp). For a much longer account, see Voline (Vsevolod Eichenbaum), The Unknown Revolution, Detroit/Chicago, 1974-(717pp).
13) The activity and power of freemasons increased from 1912 onwards. There is sufficient evidence for us to say that they were in control of the ship of State by July 1917, when they completely monopolised Kerensky's cabinet, having been involved in various coup plots prior to the abdication, implicating army officers, leading industrialists, future Bolsheviks and many top people from most political parties. See L.Haimson, op.cit., and R.Abraham, Alexander Kerensky: the first love of the revolution, Sidgwick and Jackson, 1987. The atmosphere at the top of the State cannot have changed much between July 1917 and Lenin's last days...
14) M.Brinton, op.cit., p.36.
15) I.Mett, The Kronstadt Uprising, 1921, London, 1967, p.32.
16) Most of this information comes from W.J.Chase, Workers, Society and the Soviet State: Labour and Life in Moscow, 1918-1929,Univ.of Illinois Press, 1987, ch.1.
17) Ibid.,p.45.
18) There was in fact a single "Bolshevik" faction which espoused the Kronstadt

rebels' cause, namely Miasnikov's Workers' Group, which split from the Workers' Opposition on this very issue and was soon forced into clandestinity before entering into relations with the German anti-Bolshevik communists, with whom it found common cause. On top of this, literally thousands of revolutionary sailors walked out of the Party in the early months of 1921.

19) We have not gone into the Petrograd strikes and the Kronstadt revolt in any great depth. For a full account, see I.Mett, op.cit. Also see A.Ciliga, The Kronstadt Revolt, 1938, a short article published in Anarchy magazine, volume 1, number 2 (second series) (the Kronstadt issue).

20) A.Nove, An Economic History of the USSR, Penguin, 1969, p.68.

21) W.Chase, op.cit., p.158.

22) For more information on the period 1928-41, see D.Filtzer, Soviet Workers and Stalinist Industrialisation: the formation of modern Soviet production relations, 1928-1941, Pluto Press, 1986. This book is packed with facts about working class struggle, despite the author's "Ticktinist" line on the "absence" of abstract labour and capitalism in the USSR.

23) This information comes from E.Buca, Vorkuta, Constable, 1956, an excellent account written by an instigator of the July 1953 Vorkuta revolt. Edward Buca was a Pole imprisoned for fighting with the Polish Home Army, which had resisted the Soviet invasion after the eviction of German forces. He was not himself a blatnoy, but his account of the blatnye has a far greater ring of truth than that of Solzhenitsyn (The Gulag Archipelago 1918-1956, 1974, Collins Harvill, 1986). In pt.3 ch.16 Solzhenitsyn says "The urka ... who adopted the Chekist faith [i.e. collaborated with the security forces] became a bitch, and his fellow thieves would cut his throat." He follows this by worrying that "People will object that it was only the bitches who accepted positions while the 'honest thieves' held to the thieves' law. [We have seen from Buca what this law consisted of.] But no matter how much I saw of one and the other, I never could see that one rabble was nobler than the other... No, you'll not get fruit from a stone, nor good from a thief." In view of Solzhenitsyn's Christianity and right-wing views, this is probably based on his own experiences after getting up the noses of the blatnye for treating them as common riff-raff.

24) E.Buca, op.cit., p.59.

25) Ibid., p.171.

26) Iztok, Notes sur l'anarchisme en URSS de 1921 à nos jours, Le Vent du Ch'min, 1983, p.24.

27) See M.McAuley, Labour Disputes in Soviet Russia, 1957-1965, Clarendon Press, 1969, pp.43-58.

28) Ibid., pp.160-162.

29) For information on strikes and riots since 1959 see B.Grancelli, op.cit., pp.184ff.; M.Holubenko, The Soviet Working Class: Discontent and Opposition, in Critique, Issue 4; Bernard L., Trente Ans de Luttes Ouvrières en URSS, 1953-1983, pubd. Organisation Communiste Libertaire, 1985; V.Haynes and O.Semyonova, Workers Against the Gulag, Pluto Press, 1979; and Le Feu Souterrain, Editions Ad Hoc, Jan.1984.

30) See B.Grancelli, op.cit., pp.144-152.

31) For "Italian strikes", see B.Grancelli, op.cit., p.185, V.Haynes and O. Semyonova, op.cit.,p.14, and Le Feu Souterrain, op.cit.

32) Trente Ans..., see note 29.

33) For a factpacked account of strikes in the 1970s and especially between 1979 and 1981, see B.Gidwitz, Labour Unrest in the Soviet Union, in Problems of Communism, Nov.-Dec.1982.

34) M.Holubenko, op.cit., p.8.

35) See Iztok, op.cit.pp.29-34 and 63-65.

36) For sources on the NTS, see Volya 17; J.Bloch and P.Fitzgerald, British Intelligence and Covert Action, Junction Books, 1983,pp.33 and 66; and, by authors "close to British intelligence", N.West, The Friends, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1988, pp.66ff., and R.Deacon, A History of the Russian Secret Service, Grafton Books, 1987, pp.307-8 and 354. Also see texts of the Association for a Free Russia, which is close to the NTS, and The Times, 12/10/88. The Ukrainian Peace News of Spring 1988 exposed a bungled effort by the NTS in the Ukraine. We wonder whether the falling influence of SMOT in the Ukraine is in fact a result of the NTS's Russophile influence.

37) Soviet Weekly, 16/1/1988.

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DEMOCRATISATION AND CIVIL SOCIETY

VERSUS THEIR ENEMY, PROLETARIAN AUTONOMY

T/SOR/18/27

Is Subversion Sane?

IN *SUBVERSION* #20 the editors mentioned our leaflet *In Defence of Revolutionary Organisation* as "Continuing the attack on the ICC. A good Read." However they failed to even mention that the text made substantial criticisms of **Subversion** themselves, far less respond to these criticisms. These revolved around two points. I shall leave, for a moment, how their criticism of the Bolshevik practice of the ICC as Stalinist serves as an apologetics for bolshevism. Rather I intend to deal more fully with Subversion's defence of a 'common sense' notion of reality.

"But the concept of Black power can, in its search for 'ideology', go in an opposite direction — it may ignore or reject an historical and class consciousness and may see "black" as pigmentation per se, rather than in the context of white racist civilisation, and that would be tragic: for a "Nigger" is a nigger first and black second."

Black Mask #10, May 1968

Subversion have recently adorned their magazine with headlines including references to madness — "If you're not miserable then you must be mad" (#20), "Class Struggle hits the road ... Motorway Madness" (#17) and conclude their article 'Visit to the Planet ICC' (#18) with the remark that "Analysis of the ICC has moved out of the realm of polemic and into the realm of psychopathology". It would seem that they see incipient madness behind a whole range of phenomena, but yet have failed to seriously address the issue of 'madness' itself.

The key to understanding psycho-pathology is to see it is as a discipline dominated by political economy. The mental patient is to a greater or lesser extent denied bourgeois subjectivity. In this they constitute a kind of psycho-niggertariat. At the depths of the mental illness system, the victim is denied any social existence and may be enslaved by the medical profession. At a less severe level, the mental patient is like a 'free black' in the ante-bellum U.S. south. Subject to enslavement at the will of the sane, should they offend, particularly if the use physical force to defend themselves. Survival often requires the cultivation of friendly sanes, who are prepared to vouch for the mental patient in times of crisis.

I must stress that I am not using the term psycho-niggertariat simply as a metaphor. I used to work in Prestwich Hospital, Manchester in the seventies, where the patients were subjected to slave labour. Deep within the bowels of the hospital was the Annexe where long-term patients were obliged to close the plastic lids of washing-up bottles under the guise of "occupational therapy". Their benefits were drawn 'on their behalf' by the hospital, which accumulated thousands of pounds. Occasionally some of this money would be spent for some luxury, such as a colour TV on the wards, but these would often mysteriously disappear. These patients were completely at the mercy of the hospital administration and most would never have any visitors.

Aside from this direct exploitation of labour, their bodies are used for countless experiments. Those familiar with the film 2001, may recall when the astronaut removes the memory banks of Hal, the computer. The mechanical voice is reciting a nursery rhyme until it grinds to a halt. Would that this were just consigned to a work of fiction. However, the world famous psychiatrist Ewen Cameron performed just such an operation on a conscious mental patient, scraping away the parts of the brain responsible for speech with a scalpel whilst she recited a nursery rhyme. (See *Journey into Madness: Medical Torturers and the Mind Controllers* by Gordon Thomas, London & New York 1988) Apparently this greatly advanced 'our' understanding of how the brain works! This is perhaps the most vile example of experimentation on mental patients, but the abuse is widespread.

Statistical studies reveal that groups traditional denied bourgeois subjectivity — e.g. Black people and women — are substantially more likely to be diagnosed as mentally ill. The dominant 'common sense' follows traditional patterns of racial and sexual domination. Resistance to such domination often remains inarticulate and as such is vulnerable to such classification.

Nevertheless mental patients have a long history of resistance. rather than cataloguing countless examples, I would like to procede with a discussion of the Socialist Patients' Collective (SPK) a book about whom was published last year (*SPK: Krankheit im Recht*, English translation published by AK Press). This group was active in Heidelberg in the seventies. Unfortunately it is often known simply as being a source for Red Army Fraction recruits. In fact the RAF dismissed those remaining in the SPK as crazies.

However they theorised "sickness as at the same time the prerequisite and the result of the capitalist process of producing production surplus value" . . . "Unlike the unemployed, it is not easy for the sick person to realise a causal connection between the misery which has stricken him as an individual, so it seems, and the process of exploitation under capitalism". They also presented a critique democratic centralism, called Multi-Focal Expansionism.

As I pointed out in *In Defence of Revolutionary Organisation*:

> *Subversion end up defending a 'common sense' notion of 'reality", as if such a thing ostensibly existing outside the realm of human discourse could be faithfully rendered within any discourse. That the ICC seek to dissociate themselves from any consensual reality should be recognised as the first step for any group aiming to become revolutionary, as all the dominant discourses are the discourses of the ruling class. Our counter-discourses seek to disrupt these discourses metered out to the rhythm of one jackboot clapping down upon us. Subversion fail to understand either how dominant discourses are structured, or how the ICC's ritualised behaviour at their meetings is appropriate to a group whose understanding of counter-discourse consists of constructing a competing paradigm.*

When groups like the SPK have set out to tackle the construction and manipulation of modern individuality (a work which the Luther Blissett multiple name project is extending), it is shameful that **Subversion** simply uses words like 'mad' and 'madness' in a completely derogatory and unscientific manner. It is all very well for **Subversion** to plaster slogans like 'Building Claimants' Counter Power' across #19. Do **Subversion** not realise that the mental patients they despise constitute a major section of claimants? In the leaflet *Screen of the Bosses, Not the Claimants* (reprinted in *Subversion* #20), the CPSA is quite properly criticised for setting Employment Service workers and Claimants against each other. **Subversion** must now be criticised for trying to erect political screens to partition off the mentally ill.

The other side of the politicised resistance of mental patients, is the dismissal of socialists and revolutionaries as insane. (Indeed when I launched the *London Psychogeographical Association*, there were even some idle prattlers who circulated rumours that I had myself gone mad.) Here, however, I would like to spend a little time dealing with the recent revival of attacks

on the sanity of John Maclean which have been spearheaded by R.Pitt in his hateful pamphlet *John Maclean and the CPGB*. Maclean had been imprisoned during the first world war for his opposition to militarism. During his second spell inside (1916-17) Maclean complained that his and other prisoners were being administered drugs in their food. The top quack in the prison service, Dr James Devon, described these as "insane delusions of persecutions" (p7). Maclean might have been wrong, but it is very clear that he was being persecuted. Pitt claims that "there is no question" that Maclean was deluded, even though they admit Maclean suffered diarrhoea and constipation alternatively. This is naïve in the extreme. Is it surprising that Maclean could find no proof that he was poisoned? Does Pitt also want us to believe that Colin Roach shot himself? Maclean may have been wrong but that's another matter.

Dr. Devon and Dr Watson attempted to undermine Maclean's savage indictment of capitalism during his trial of May 1918 by denouncing Maclean as insane, and attempted to have him certified. That two prison doctors should use insanity as a pretext for removing a revolutionary from circulation should come as no surprise, but this refrain was taken up by Bolshevik loyalists when Maclean resisted the policy of affiliating the evolving British communist party to the Labour Party. In 1920 Maclean also denounced Lieutenant-Colonel L'Estrange Malone as a government spy. Malone was an MP who had been deeply involved in anti-Bolshevik propaganda, denouncing Maclean by name. He visited the Soviet Union in 1919, where he chummed up with Trotsky. He then popped up as a leading Bolshevik apologist, until after a spell in jail he moved to the right of the Labour Party. Again Maclean might have been wrong, but it is clear that Malone was a shit attracted to the Bolsheviks for precisely the reasons that communist revolutionaries like Otto Rühle denounced them. This professional soldier stood in a review of the Red Army, shoulder to shoulder with Trotsky, soon to become the butcher of the Kronstadt revolutionaries.

Maclean remained a prominent member of the Scottish Communist Left, who resisted parliamentarianism, affiliation to the Labour Party, and was active in showing solidarity with Cockney Communist Left, when representatives of Poplar Councillors who had called the cops on the Unemployed Workers Organisation, tried to pass themselves off as friends of the unemployed. He also rejected the policy of the *Hands Off Russia* call for strike action to force withdrawal of British troops by arguing that it was through developing the revolution in Britain which would save Russia.

New Interventions, an otherwise tedious Leftist rag ran a review of Pitt's pamphlet (Vol 7. No.1) by Paul B. Smith, who writes:

"The author [i.e. Pitt] is worried that as a consequence of the recent disintegration of the Soviet Union, workers and intellectuals might be attracted to the ultra-left sectarianism of Maclean, Sylvia Pankhurst and Guy Aldred. These worries inform his defence of the orthodox Communist Party line that Maclean's isolation from the party was the cause of his mental illness. The pamphlet is a powerful warning of the personal consequences of 'ultra-leftism': isolation and madness. The reader is left wondering whether Maclean was an exception or whether Pitt thinks that all forms of 'ultra-leftism' are symptoms of insanity."

Without sanctioning Smith's various Trotskyite illusions (he is involved with *Critique*, who have been dealt with in *Swamp Thing* , Summer 1994, which is available from me for 2 First Class Stamps), his response to Pitt reveals how Subversion's combined use of the critique of Stalinism and madness, actually work together in defending a diffuse form of leftism whereby the door is being held open to rag-bag of refugees emerging from the collapse of Trotskyism. Thus **Subversion** headlines an article *Reclaim the Future*, the name used by the more populist split from the Trotskyist Workers Revolutionary Party. **Subversion** is keeping its cards close to its chest here, as it prepares to launch its recruitment drive. Far from heralding a new social movement, the collaboration between Reclaim the Streets and the Liverpool Dockers is another stage in the degeneration of leftism. In no way do such developments indicate the green shoots of recovery for the class struggle. Compared to the French lorry drivers strike, it's nothing.

In the final analysis, it was not isolation from 'the party' which Maclean suffered from, but, alongside the rest of the workers' movement, the defeat of the revolution. However, he did not jump on the leftist bandwagon, and stood out against the reconstruction of reformism. Looking again at Maclean's *The War After the War* (written in late 1917 when he was allegedly 'mad'), I noticed that he warns "that the government intends to use the workshop movement in the interests of the capitalist class" through the increase in the intensity of exploitation, i.e. through the transition from formal to real domination of capital, as predicted by Marx in *Capital*. In Britain, where the class struggle had not developed to the same extent as Germany, the Scottish Left, Cockney Left and Welsh Left remained dispersed (which is why I use these terms) and did not develop the same clarity as arose in Germany. Once again it is the level of the class struggle which is the barometer, rather than how this or that individual gyrates around this or that organisation.

The problem which revolutionaries of those days had to face was that the Bolshevik regime was more concerned with developing a new phase of capitalism rather than in spurring on world revolution. It was hard for them to face this fact as it meant that the prospect of revolution has receded for the foreseeable future. After all they had suffered, for some this was simply too much to bare. Even the strongest revolutionary groups, such as the German General Workers Union (AAUD) were soon to collapse. Maclean may have been wrong about the poisoning and whether Malone and others were conscious tools of the state, and he was certainly wrong to spread his accusations without offering any evidence. But this weakness should not simply be laid at the door of a proletarian fighter whose health had been undermined by prison. What has to be challenged is the way workers put up with a sleaze bag like Malone for two minutes. It would be as if Teddy Taylor responded to an increase of class struggle by dismissing his career in the Tory party, polished up the working class credentials of growing up in the Gorbals, and was accepted as a leader.

"The demise of the Soviet Union has meant that leftists have become more critical of Leninism — not because they suddenly saw Bolshevism as a counter-revolutionary weapon against the working class, but because the 'Soviet' Union failed to provide a 'material basis' for their arrogance and elitism." (*Swamp Thing*) Both **Subversion** and the ICC hope to attract these elements, but in different ways, **Subversion** offering the fellowship of the broad church, the ICC the doctrinal certainties of the ideologically elect. **Subversion** refuse to resolve contradictions, but on the contrary promote the tensions these create as evidence of political life within their organisation. Contrariwise, the ICC seek to resolve such contradictions, but at purely idealist level — resulting in them caving in on themselves within ever decreasing circles.

Our leaflet was what it said it was, *In Defence of Revolutionary Organisation*, as much a critique of **Subversion** as an attack on the ICC, and in no way a 'continuation' of **Subversion**'s attack on the ICC, anymore than the *ICC*'s formulation of their reified notion of 'parasitism' is a continuation of our critique of Trotskyists as parasites (*Swamp Thing*). We used the term to specifically refer to "counter-revolutionaries who directly collaborated in the Imperialist war effort during the second world war — smashing strikes and grassing up revolutionaries (for execution)." We did not use the term to simply attack anyone who criticises us.

Luther Blissett, December 1996

Luther Blissett may be contacted at Box 15, 138 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS

Subversion – the Party's Over!

Ten years ago a group of us got together to form Subversion. Some had been in (and out of) Wildcat, others had been politically working together with those comrades for a number of years previously. We wanted to create a new organisation that could carry on the work of developing communist ideas and politics free from the need to label ourselves as either dogmatically marxist or anarchist.

Recently though, despite continuing to agree on our basic revolutionary politics, we have had disagreements about the way forward both organisationally and practically. There have also been some personal disagreements. These have made it hard for some of us to work together. As a result there are now only five of us left in the group and we have had to conclude that we no longer have the energy or enthusiasm to continue our activities as a collective.

There will be no further issues of our bulletin, though back issues and other publications are still available for the cost of postage for the time being. The Box number will be kept open for the next six months. The web site will continue indefinitely, but as the personal responsibility of the comrade who set it up.

A balance sheet of our activities:

- We have produced 24 editions of the Subversion magazine, 23 of which have been distributed for free. The print run since issue 10 has been 1000 and most have been successfully distributed – many by people who write to us for bundles. We have produced eight pamphlets, four of which are still available. We have produced numerous leaflets.
- In Manchester we have run many public meetings – some good, some awful. We organised these in collaboration with variously the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF) and Class War as well as on our own.
- We organised a national conference on the State and Capital and initiated a series of day schools with the ACF.
- We have attended networking meetings, including the Revolutionary Socialist Network, the Class Struggle Anarchist Network and the Northern Anarchist Network. We continue to be involved in the latter project.
- Wherever possible we have involved ourselves with nationally and locally important episodes of the class struggle. These included: the Anti-Poll Tax movement, where we helped set up one group and were active in a number of others; support for the Merseyside Dockers – again helping set up the Manchester support group; fighting the Job Seekers Allowance – getting the group going in Manchester as well as being active in other towns and nationally through the Groundswell network; involvement in the campaign against the M66 around Manchester and subsequently becoming involved in some Earth First! activities in Oldham and Manchester. This list would not be complete without mentioning our continuing efforts where we work and some, admittedly limited, success in initiating industrial action amongst teachers in Oldham. Our work around these issues led to the best articles we wrote. They were based on our real personal experiences of struggle, either as direct participants or through involvement with support groups.
- Set up a web-site featuring not only our own publications, but also important texts produced by earlier communist groups and individuals, a number of whom were participants in the 1918 German Revolution.
- Maintained regular international contacts and correspondence.

In all these activities we have sought to work in a principled and non-sectarian way with other revolutionaries.

This is not bad going, in our opinion, for a group that for most of its life numbered than eight members or less.

Most importantly, we have been part of a process that has reshaped those politics that are often labelled communist, anarchist communist, council communist or libertarian communist. We would have liked to have had more influence, unfortunately by choosing to distance ourselves from both the marxist and anarchist labels, we have bred some suspicion amongst those who have preferred their cosy comforts.

Our greatest success was probably the Subversion bulletin. This provided an organised framework for revolutionaries to debate new issues arising in the class struggle. It attracted many contributions from non-members of our group, especially in the last six issues. At the time there wasn't really any other publication fulfilling the same role. On the other hand some of us felt that, in the process, the Subversion viewpoint got somewhat diluted. Moreover, there was too often little editorial critique or comment on the articles we published. At times we were reluctant to take a collective stance on the issues they raised. Whilst some might see this as another example of non-sectarianism, it all too often reflected a laziness on our behalf. This process also reflected the malaise that we had got into. In recent issues there has been little new produced by ourselves other than reports or book reviews. Our own lack of anything new to say is probably the most compelling reason to wind up the group.

Hopefully other opportunities will arise for a publication similar to Subversion in the future.

So what was the problem?

When we started Subversion we didn't really have a clear idea of the direction we hoped it would go in. However, we were pretty clear what we didn't want it to be. We didn't want it to be monolithic, though we did want the politics to be clear and for disagreements to be based on an understanding of what others were saying – all of which suggested the need for pretty rigorous discussion. As time went by, we also realised that we needed Subversion to grow. We never intended ourselves to be a purely local group, indeed although most of us live in and around Manchester, we do have a couple of members in other parts of the country. On the other hand, we did not see ourselves as some focal point for others to join, as some embryo of a new organisation or party. We had always hoped that other groups would emerge in other places and that as a result of practical co-operation a fusion would come about, creating a new communist organisation. That is the reason we have tried to be non-sectarian and have enthusiastically worked in the different networks we mentioned above. It is also the reason that we have worked so closely with the Anarchist Communist Federation.

In our opinion, groups need to grow or they stagnate. After a period of working together, people either end up agreeing on everything or end up knowing too well what the lines of disagreement are. Groups need a tension within discussions to provoke the development of ideas. If that does not happen, the result is sterility. We were faced, in Subversion, with having reached the point where that sterility was beginning to set in. As we said above, as a group we have produced nothing original for the past two years. We ended up living off other people's reactions to two discussions we started – one over the JSA and the other over the article "Green Communism". Even those responses had begun to dry up.

It was out of this situation that the disagreements we mentioned at the beginning arose. Some of these were personal and frankly, had we been a larger and more thriving group, would have counted for little. As with tired marriages, small problems become multiplied until only divorce is the solution. We also disagreed on the direction the group should go in. One viewpoint was that we should be working towards creating a national network of communists. This should be based on individual membership, drawing upon groups like ourselves, the ACF, Aufheben and the like. The majority in the group felt (and feel) that this proposal, whilst laudable, is impractical. We do not see where the basis for such a network exists. Indeed, since the aborted attempt by Aufheben to get a kind of loose network to produce a newsletter a few years ago, nobody else has shown much enthusiasm for the idea. We actually think that the ACF as it exists is already such a network and don't see why they would want to join in another effort. Outside of the ACF we can see nobody that would be interested. We may be wrong and would love to be proved so. If we are wrong we would undoubtedly support such an initiative. Failure to agree on this point, combined with the other problems was enough to make us look more seriously at the state we were in.

At the end of the day, our main form of activity, as a group, at the moment is the production of Subversion. It is hard, intensive work to produce and distribute it. As we no longer feel any great enthusiasm for doing this, we had to ask ourselves – "What is the point?" Therefore the only honest thing to do is to cease publication and to explain to those who read Subversion why we are doing so.

What Next?

At the moment we can see no particular political organisation that we could all enthusiastically join. There are organisations doing good work and we would refer you to previous issues of Subversion for recommendations. In this country we would recommend Organise! as an interesting publication and suggest our readers contact the ACF to obtain a copy. It looks like Smash Hits could also provide a useful vehicle for discussion. For information purposes, both Counter Information and SCHnews make good reading.

We still see the need for political organisation and hope to be able to contribute to something new and worthwhile in the future. In the meantime we will continue to be active as individuals in various ways. We may also, if the need arises and the energy allows, produce future interventions in the name of Subversion.

Our thanks go to our many contributors, readers and supporters during the last ten years.

Comradely,

Subversion

Sept 1998.

Subversion on the Web

http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/8195
email: knightrose@geocities.com

The web site is currently receiving around 120 – 150 visits a month. It contains the following:

- Subversion – issues 17 to 23.
- Subversion pamphlets: The Best of Subversion; the Second Best of Subversion; Ireland, Nationalism and Imperialism; Labouring in Vain, why Labour is not a Socialist Party.
- Wildcat pamphlets: Class War on the Home Front – the history of the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation; How Socialist is the SWP?; Capitalism and its Revolutionary Destruction
- The German Revolution – various pamphlets by and about participants in the struggle from 1918 to 1923.
- Communism v Reforms by Anton Pannekoek and Sylvia Pankhurst.
- Other texts including a Wildcat text on the Zapatistas; 24 Hours in the Life of the Car; a vision of the future.
- A discussion section.

I currently have three projects planned for the future:

1. Blasts from the Past. Texts that influenced us to become what we are today. I have scanned and am about to upload texts from Point Blank! (1972) probably the best Situationist Text to come out in the 70s. I have also scanned "As We Don't See It" and "Third Worldism or Socialism?" (from the pamphlet Ceylon – the JVP Uprising). I would welcome suggestions for other inclusions – particularly if already typed!
2. A pamphlet on the Factory Committees in the Russian Revolution. Originally published in 1984 by Rod Jones in Wales, an excellent account of the period. This will take some time to type, hopefully it will be out by Christmas.
3. Working Class Opposition to the Nazis in Germany. I am just about to start researching this area and at the moment intend to focus on the Edelweiss Pirates.

I would also like to expand the discussion section and would welcome contributions. These can relate to anything on the web-site. I only ask that they are sent to me either on disk (PC or MAC) or to my email address. It may be that this way we can continue some of the spirit of Subversion, albeit in a

more restricted way. I would also welcome new contributions on any subjects that are broadly in line with our statement "Where We Stand".

I can also be contacted by mail at the following address:

Box 127, Oldham OL4 3FE

What we said in our first ever issue.

Introducing Subversion

This journal is being produced by ex-members and sympathisers of the WILDCAT group, which dissolved itself earlier this year.

We got together in February this year [1988] because we wanted to see the continuation of a voice for revolutionary communist p0litics.

We want Subversion to contain articles which are both interesting and informative – and most importantly free of the idiotic jargon and sectarian slag-offs of most of the left communist press. It is in this spirit of non-sectarianism that we have reprinted a number of leaflets produced by other groups.

Subversion welcomes contributions from its readers, whether articles, leaflets or letters. We would prefer them to be typed and insist that writers attempt to produce them in a style that is easily understandable by anyone interested in reading them.

Spoofversion

We are producing a limited number of a "final" issue of Subversion – called "Spoofversion" – in time for the Anarchist Bookfair. As with all our other publications, this one if free. If you'd like a copy, then send a first class stamp to: Box 127, Oldham OL4 3FE (without mentioning Subversion in the address).

Subversion Dept. 10, 1 Newton Street, Piccadilly,
Manchester M1 1HW, England.

Spoofversion

Incorporating Subversion no. 24
and Spoofversion no. 1 Autumn 1998

Free!
(or donation)

In this issue: How Socialist is CAMRA? ... Exploding Statues
The Marx-Dickens Letters ... Can Arthur Scargill Dance?
Children: Agents of the Bourgeoisie? ... and lots more

The PAPER that FOLLOWS the GLISTENING TRAIL of

the SNAIL of REVOLUTION!

Introduction

This issue of SPOOFVERSION has been brought out by former members of the ex-group SUBVERSION. We have renamed ourselves SPOOFVERSION because the word "spoof" is descended from the Latin word "*spufiouo*", which means "cut off the head of the tyrant". It is interesting to see how words change aspects of their meaning over time. Thus this magazine is not to be taken as a modern-day "spoof", or joke, but as an ancient call to arms against our oppressors.

In an effort to inject some light relief into the journal, we have included on pages 11-12 an article that can be best described as dada-surrealo-constructo-lettrist; in comic-falsetto tone it briefly lists SUBVERSION's successes and failures, and the reasons for its demise.

For the historical record we at SPOOF[previously SUB]VERSION are/were a group of effete male and female erotic dancers. We have worked in many parts of Britain, and indeed the world, and all our writings and actions are based on analyses gained from our own experiences, plus some reading up at the local library. The demise of SUBVERSION should be seen as a passing on to a higher plane of activity for we intend to concentrate more on our dancing. By strategically placing ourselves at class struggle hotspots around the globe and then dancing in an erotic way we hope to not only inspire further acts of courage on the part of the proletariat, but also to help break the confidence of the international bloodsucking boss class and their many helpers. *Our dance is a dance of death and a dance of life.*

There may or may not be further issues of SPOOFVERSION, which may or may not be obtained from:

Box 127
Oldham
OL4 3FE
England, UK

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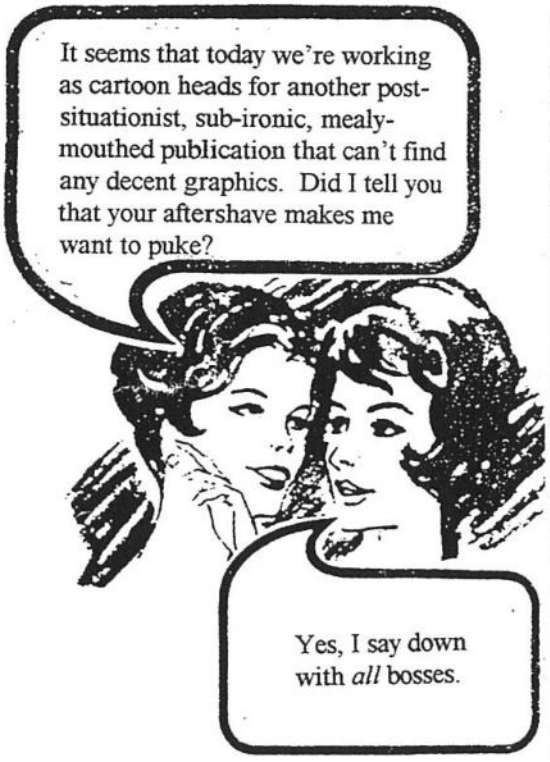
My Afternoon of Psychogeographic Hell in London


It seems that today we're working as cartoon heads for another post-situationist, sub-ironic, mealy-mouthed publication that can't find any decent graphics. Did I tell you that your aftershave makes me want to puke?
Yes, I say down with *all* bosses.

Publications

If you don't like SPOOFVERSION, you probably won't like these either:

The Corpse of the Millenium

A *Proletarian Gob* Special Issue.
People in the "Western World" live in a society culturally dominated by ideas of hygeine, sport, health and what passes these days for beauty. This was the central aim of the German National Socialist Workers Party (the Nazis). To build a society fit for work and fit for the promotion of a nation - that is, *stupid.* Christian heretics a few hundred years ago might have envisaged this millenium as a time when priests, lawyers, baillifs, nobility and the rich would finally get their throats cut. But Christianity has become *Rational* and it has made sure everyone else has too. In this idiot world *reasonableness* is the new motto, *democracy* marks the parameters of the game we are allowed to play, and *foolishness* has been conquered.

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No. 21: South Korea; Liverpool Dockers; Green Communism; the JSA; Getting A Job; Northern Ireland
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How Socialist is... The Campaign for Real Ale?

In the first three decades of this century the temperance movement in Britain achieved a prominence in working class culture and politics that it had never seen before and will probably never see again. The philosophy of the many temperance societies that existed during this period was that drink was the ruin of ordinary folk and should therefore be avoided at all costs. In place of drinking these societies suggested that people should march through urban streets waving banners, have discussions, and, most importantly of all, sing.

There were many types of temperance society, ranging from the Evangelical Christian, to the liberal, to the dialectical materialist, and although the nature of their discussions may have differed they were all agreed on the evils of drink and the benefits of singing. In fact, members of the *Revolutionary Syndicalist Temperance League* of Reading created something of a sensation in 1912 when, as *The Times* reported, "five stout fellows recently laid off from a local tile factory, having avoided drink for a full year, sang popular operatic songs continuously for a week in the main high street". They were supported in this marathon effort by their families and fellow workers, and gained a great deal of respect from the local establishment. They were offered menial, poorly-paid jobs involving heavy-lifting by the owner of the Heelas linen and general goods store, and praised in the local newspaper. Unfortunately, things went wrong when one of their number punched the Mayor of Reading in the face during a civic ceremony and the five were forced to flee the country, eventually settling in Northern Spain.

Temperance societies had arisen in the second half of the nineteenth century in response to the need of liberal reformers from the upper classes to instil their own senses of decency and morality into the working class. The working class was perceived by most of its betters as some sort of stupid but dangerous beast that had to be controlled. However, the days had passed when that control could be secured entirely by force, during the nineteenth century workers were gaining strength in the class struggle by sheer weight of numbers and by the fact that they were starting to see how, collectively, they could improve their lot. Dangerous and unhealthy ideas of socialism had to be thwarted where they sprang up in the minds of workers. The Church, which had done such good work in previous centuries when the ordinary folk were forced to attend services, was no longer fulfilling its moral function, new organs for the diffusion of sound thinking had to be created, one of these was the temperance society (others were: education; journalism; extension of the franchise; whippet racing; cleanliness; and Impressionist Art, to name only a few).

Drunkenness had long been a "problem" in the working class. For many, of course, it was an escape from their bleak, slum-dwelling, over-worked, poverty-stricken existence. For many male drunkards it was an escape from the demands of family life, where, after a hard day's work men were often greeted at home by noisy and difficult children and a wife who constantly expected her husband to do chores around the slum. The most despised drunkards, of course, were mothers who seemed to have abandoned all their dignity when they took to the beer and consequently neglected their children, husbands, relatives, and gruelling day job. Others liked drinking for the taste of it and the average strength of a beer before the First World War was six per cent. During the war the strength of beer was reduced drastically by law, along with opening times, and it is only in recent times that British beer has begun to approach the strength and quality of pre-WW1 beer.

Beer in the North of England and Scotland has never recovered from this reduction in strength. Beers such as Boddingtons, Tetleys, and McEwans continue to insult its drinkers with their insipid taste and strength, while northern drinkers seem to have fallen for the lie that good beer should be tasteless, weak and with a frothy head. In the south the renaissance in good beer is now well established, much of this has to do with the unfavourable public reaction to Watney's Red Barrel beer of the 1970's (Red Barrel was the result of the socialisation of Watney's beer production , something we will come back to later).

Drunkenness in the working class was also seen as a problem by early socialists. *The Confederation of Dialectic Materialist Teetotallers of Greater London* declared in their paper, *The Insurrectionary Teetotaller*, that "Drink is effectively a conspiracy by the Ruling Class to keep the poor and dispossessed of this world in the thrall of stupidity and delusion. Not only does drink prevent us from seeing our

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How Socialist is CAMRA?

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situation as it really is, it also drains us of the strength and determination to gather together to put things right". In other issues drink is blamed for disrupting family life, turning husband against wife, causing crime and assault amongst members of the working class, and leading to portliness. "Who is the victor," the paper asked, "When the worker is drunk? Why the owners of the breweries and the rest of their Parasite Kind!" Not only were the Dialectic Materialist Teetotallers fervent agitators for socialism, they were also one of the best harmonising groups of all the temperance societies, rivalling even the *Peckham League of the Righteous Sons of Temperance*, who had in their midst two Italian tenors who had once sung professionally.

Drinking can lead to heated domestic disputes

By the beginning of the 1930's it seemed clear that the revolutionary wave that had swept across Europe in the wake of the First World War had truly receded (although, ripples were still making an impact in other areas of the globe, for example, south east Asia). Workers turned more and more to drink and the influence of the temperance societies waned, a feeling of existential nihilism gripped European workers. Guy Aldred, the famous Glasgow anarchist, wrote, in his paper *The Spur*, in 1933, "Defeat has cost us dear, the workers have lost their spirit but found their spirits". By "spirits", Aldred was referring mainly to gin and cheap blended whisky. As a connoisseur of single malts, Aldred found this development particularly disheartening. Out of this despair however, in Britain at least, a new more positive movement began slowly to take shape. The first publication to tentatively express this new mood was a little paper from Shaftesbury entitled *The Nihilist Drinker*.

The Nihilist Drinker was produced by forty-seven farm labourers, of which thirty-two were men. The paper advocated the seizure of breweries by the workers and the free distribution of beer to all. This was what they termed their "last demand", having analysed the failure of the post-war revolutionary wave and being aware of the capitalist nature of the new Soviet Union *The Nihilist Drinker* argued that the one feasible demand left was that for decent and free beer. This caused a heated debate in revolutionary circles in the southern farming communities of England. Two coppice workers from Hampshire were soon producing their own flyers under the title "*Demand the Impossible*", which refused to accept that workers should limit their revolutionary ambitions despite the adverse conditions.

The Hampshire Impossibilists, as they became known, gained ground quite fast and by the end of 1934 they could boast a membership of four and a print run of their flyer of over twenty. But things were not to go so well for the Impossibilists during 1935. They made a serious blunder in one of their leaflets on the question of "production for use", in which they confused the concepts of valorisation and voluntarism and somehow ended up with the theory that only the common rabbit was qualified to take the vanguard position in workers struggles. Despite an abject apology and rejection of this theory, along with any advocacy of a workers vanguard, in the very next issue of their bulletin, the Impossibilists were ridiculed mercilessly in the wider revolutionary milieu. Soon after this debacle one of the founders of their group died in an accident in the woods (which in those days was more like a factory), and another one was informed by a solicitor that he was the heir to a large gaming estate on the borders of Scotland. The two surviving members struggled on for two more issues but finally gave up in the summer and pursued a series of arson attacks on the motors cars of the wealthy (they didn't want to risk the lives of domestic staff by attacking their houses) before escaping to the Isle of Wight where they ran a small bed and breakfast. They were finally arrested in 1953 and sentenced to twelve years each, both died in prison.

The defeat of the Impossibilists made it easier for the more reformist groups around *The Nihilist Drinker* to gain greater influence amongst the workers. Finally, by the end of the 1930's a regroupment had occurred in which a kind of umbrella organisation, which called itself *The Campaign for Real Ale*, held sway.

The Campaign For Real Ale soon revealed its credentials as a labourist, recruiting organisation with a very weak analysis of the capitalist economic system. Despite its insistence on cheap but quality beer for all, the Campaign showed no hesitation in supporting the Second World War, and throwing its weight behind Winston Churchill. Some of the local branches of the Campaign objected to such manoeuvres by the leadership but they were soon quashed by being expelled or arrested under temporary new police powers in place during the war.

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How Socialist is CAMRA?

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After the war the Campaign decided to follow Clement Atlee and the new Labour Government, and in 1951 the Campaign itself was rewarded for its unflagging new devotion by being made Secretary of State for Overseas Trade. The post was filled by a rota of twenty-two executive members of the Campaign. This was the highest post the Campaign ever attained but there were problems with the rotation system. One young post-holder, Michael Foot, who went on to become a Labour M.P. and Party Leader, recalled in the 1970's: "It was really a terrible shambles, often six of us would appear at Government functions because we had all misread the roster, then it would be a hell of a job to fit us all in the one place at the dinner table, and, of course, we never got enough to eat. It was terribly funny really, what with all the rationing that the general public had to put up with and all, and we would often fight over the trifle and get it all down our suits. Ah, yes, halcyon days..."

With the return of a Conservative government in the mid 1950's the fortunes of The Campaign For Real Ale went into a long decline. This was also a time when the quality of beer began to hit new lows as the breweries conglomerated and produced far greater volumes than previously. But many workers were still unhappy about the beer they were forced to drink and, disheartened by the ineffectiveness of the Campaign, began to form autonomous beer appreciation organisations. One notable group was "*Good Beer or Barbarism*", which took its name and philosophy from the more scientifically Marxist French drinking group, "*Socialisme ou Barbarie*". Both groups held with the theory that capitalism was in terminal decay (decadence theory) and that it would take only a few monumentally good drinking sessions across the world to send it to its grave. But this strategy relied on good quality beer, which, in the 1950's and 1960's was really only obtainable in Belgium, where, ironically, much of it was brewed by reactionary Trappist Monks. So it was that many radicals in the period agitated for the raising of beer production levels in Belgium to facilitate an export push that would bring capitalism to its knees. The massive contradictions in this plan were partly brought into perspective by the *Situationist* movement in 1960's France, but even the Situationists held back from dumping the theory of capitalist decadence. Guy Debord, the writer of "*The Society of the Spectacle*", went so far as to try to bring about the downfall of capitalism all on his own by going on long drinking sessions around Europe, some say he was close to being successful.

Back in Britain the group *Solidarity* began advocating "self-management", which was to have a profound impact on the history of British beer. In the 1970's brewery workers across Britain began to gain real power on the shop floor, so much so, in fact, that two companies socialised their whole production process as a way of avoiding long strikes and financial ruin. In Watney's, the bosses put on overalls and the workers sat in the managers offices going over the books, for a few short months everyone worked as an equal and a feeling of real positivity gripped the people involved. Collectively they decided to bring out a new beer to mark the success of their self-management initiative. They called it *Red Barrel*, and it was an unqualified disaster. Instead of trying to produce a real ale of distinction they had produced a "plastic" beer. Instead of listening to radical beer drinkers around the country they had merely gone for a symbolic name. To this day the true reasons why Socialist Watney's made such a stupendous mistake have not been fully revealed, although some suspect the involvement of the State.

Anyway, this was just the spur the virtually moribund Campaign For Real Ale needed. They organised pickets of Watney's, recruited hundreds of new beer drinkers, and finally got Watney's to withdraw Red Barrel from the domestic market. Watney's never recovered from this humiliation, they sacked their entire workforce and introduced a quasi-fascist management style that had been developed by Cadbury's, the chocolate manufacturer. [Interestingly, a survivor of the other self-managed brewery experiment still lives on in the form of Fuller's E.S.B., or Extra Socialist Bitter, made by Fuller, Smith and Turner of Chiswick. The experiment at Fuller's ended in 1978 when the owners organised a dawn raid on all the homes of the brewery workers, smashed up their bathrooms and sacked them.]

Self-management had proved to be an impossible strategy for workers, it now became clear that only a total demolition of every aspect of the capitalist system would be enough to ensure freedom. However, The Campaign For Real Ale chose to ignore the fact that dictatorship of the proletariat was the only viable option for the protection and advancement of good beer. Instead the Campaign decided to lobby government and recruit as many people as possible on a vague and misleading anarcho-syndic-eco-socialist ticket. And now, having been retuned by Thatcherism, the Campaign has come into its own as an almost professional body that someone like Tony Blair might well admire.

And what of beer itself? When will proper beer have its place in the sun? When will the likes of Boddingtons be tipped down the toilet forever? And when will we be able to enjoy a drink knowing that all the bosses are dead and gone?

Blast from the Past: The Moving Statues of Leeds

"It is impossible to walk around this city without seeing on every street corner and in every public square images of our oppressors: kings and queens; aristocrats and industrialists; explorers and scientists; politicians, generals and admirals. The early Christians at least had the humility to build their churches out of wood because they expected the Second Coming at any moment. The present-day ruling class erects tributes to itself sculpted from stone and confidently expects them to last for all eternity. ***It is time we shook them out of their complacency***".

With these words a small group of anarcho-communists announced the start of a series of actions which was to grip the northern English city of Leeds in a fever of excitement throughout the winter of 1928-29. Their first target was a statue of the scientist Joseph Priestley (so-called "discoverer of oxygen") which stood on the west side of City Square. On the morning of 6 November 1928 this entire monument was found to have been blown to smithereens during the night, its parts lying scattered all around in a radius of several hundred yards.

It is likely that Guy Fawkes Night was chosen for this first action as the noise of an explosion would be less likely to attract undue attention or suspicion. However the extent of the devastation indicates perhaps some miscalculation in the quantity of explosive used, even though we know that the group included a number of former soldiers and ex-miners (sacked in the aftermath of the General Strike), who certainly ought to have known what to do with explosives and detonators.

Explaining the destruction of the scientist Priestley in a letter published in the ***Leeds Mercury***, the group stated: *"The regimenting of workers in the factories and the phenomenon of people toiling endlessly in poverty are just as much the result of science's role in society as spectacular inventions and handy gadgets. In the Middle Ages the feudal rulers relied on despotic politics and an ideology of religious dogma to maintain their grip on power. In the modern age the capitalist ruling class employs parliamentary politics and the ideology of science for the same purpose."*

Joseph Priestley (1733-1804): so-called "discoverer of oxygen"

Over the next few weeks a number of statues met a similar fate: on 11 November, in Woodhouse Square, the iron-founder and former Mayor Sir Peter Fairbairn; on 13 November, in City Square again, Vicar of Leeds William Farquhar Hook; on 29 November, by the corner of Woodhouse Lane and Hyde Park Road, Sir Robert Peel. These attacks were followed by two further daring raids on a now heavily-policed City Square: the first (on 19 December) succeeding in toppling from his mount Edward Prince of Wales (also known as The Black Prince, and absurdly described on the statue's base as "Upholder of the Rights of the People in the Good Parliament"), then three days later returning to complete the destruction of the Prince's horse as well.

This most famous piece of statuary in the entire city was painstakingly re-assembled and then, to protect it from further assault, re-erected high up on a towering plinth where it still stands to this day. Similar steps were taken to save Queen Victoria (corner of Woodhouse Lane and Clarendon Road) from further attacks, while other monuments such as that honouring the Duke of Wellington (corner of Clarendon Road and Moorland Road) had dense, prickly shrubs planted all

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The Moving Statues of Leeds

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around their bases to prevent explosive charges from being placed anywhere nearby. Later still, battalions of troops were drafted in to mount an around-the-clock armed guard on certain strategic monuments. They were taunted by passers-by who would jeer: "Today it's just statues of the bosses you're guarding, tomorrow you'll be asked to shoot us down to save the bastards themselves!"

Perhaps in response to such measures, the group's first attack of the new year was aimed at a different type of target. During the night of 17/18 January 1929, in Burmantofts Cemetery, the large grey granite gravestone marking the burial place of the MP and pioneer of ready-made clothing Sir John Barran was blown to pieces. It was also apparent that an attempt had been made to dig open the grave itself and to extract what remained of Barran's body.

Of all the actions carried out by the group it was this one which provoked the most outraged reaction in the local press. An editorial in the ***Yorkshire Post*** was typical in its description of the Burmantofts Cemetery attack as "a scandal devised by perverted minds and perpetrated by depraved sub-human lunatics".

Some extracts from a reply issued by the group show how easily they were able to dismiss such remarks: "*It is true*," they said, "*that we intended to dig up John Barran's body and give him the good kicking he sadly never got while he was alive... Why should he be left to 'rest in peace' in death when he never allowed his workers such luxury in life... We never heard the Yorkshire Post describe it as a scandal that one man should amass such riches as can hardly be imagined on the backs of hundreds of workers toiling for 16 or 18 hours a day in crowded, dimly-lit, 'sub-human' sweat-shops... So long as we continue to direct our anger against the bosses, and not inwards against ourselves or fellow members of our class, you will not make so-called 'lunatics' out of us.*"

It is said that the writer Lewis Grassic Gibbon was so inspired by reports of the Burmantofts incident that he gave the title ***Grey Granite*** to the last novel of his brilliant trilogy, ***A Scots Quair***. And despite the newspapers' attempts to whip up hostility against the group, widespread approval of what it was doing was evident in the spate of 'copycat' attacks on monuments and graves of the ruling class, not carried out by the group itself but by unknown supporters. These took place not only within the city but also in outlying districts such as Pudsey, Churwell, Morley, Guiseley and Garforth.

These 'sympathetic' actions were seldom accompanied by the kind of detailed propagandistic statements with which the main group usually claimed responsibility for explosions. More typically they would be announced as the blowing-up of H. R. Marsden (corner of Woodhouse Lane and Raglan Road) on 3 March 1929 was: "*We don't know who the —- Marsden was and frankly we don't give a —-. The fact a statue was put up to him is all we need to know and that's why he —-ing got it.*"

Perhaps the most striking of all the so-called 'copycat' attacks was against the Leeds University War Memorial sculpted by Eric Gill. A stone relief depicting 'Christ driving the moneylenders out of the Temple', it had aroused great hostility from local capitalists on its unveiling in 1923 because Gill had portrayed the moneylenders wearing modern-day bourgeois clothing. After being blown-up it was repaired at great expense (the equivalent of £1.19 million at today's prices) and moved from its outdoor site to its present-day location in the University's Michael Sadler Building. The reason for this attack was to be found in the single word ***ABUSER*** painted on the wall above the rubble, showing this to be a rare instance of an action directed against the sculptor himself.

The attack on the Gill sculpture on 29 March 1929 appears to have been the last in the series of actions. It is unclear why they stopped, but the coming to an end of the long, dark winter nights which provided a cover for these activities may have been one factor. In all at least 27 statues or monuments were reported to have been attacked and 6 graves disturbed, although it is likely that many other actions went unreported in order not to encourage the movement.

Some critics have said that the whole 'campaign' was entirely futile, because for every statue that was blown up, the bosses just erected another in its place. On the other hand, every time they issued a statement claiming responsibility for an explosion, the group did manage to get some basic revolutionary propaganda published and circulated in the local newspapers. Perhaps their greatest achievement, however, was that such was the care taken by the group in planning and carrying out its actions, in the whole 5 months from November 1928 to March 1929, not a single one of its members was so much as questioned in connection with these events, let alone arrested, tried, convicted or imprisoned.

War Memorial sculpted by the abuser Eric Gill

Remembering the Paris Commune

During the 1950s and 1960s the *Daily Mail* ran a series of articles on great revolts and uprisings throughout history. On 18th March 1962 they examined the Paris Commune of 1871, below are a couple of extracts that we thought were worth reprinting for a laugh if nothing else.

*Engels' remark, "Look at the Paris Commune - **that** was the dictatorship of the proletariat," should be taken seriously in order to reveal what the dictatorship of the proletariat as a political regime is not (the various forms of dictatorship over the proletariat in the name of the proletariat).*

The Commune had no leaders. And this at a time when the idea of the necessity of leaders was universally accepted in the proletarian movement. This is the first reason for its paradoxical successes and failures. The official organisers of the Commune were incompetent (if measured up against Marx or Lenin, or even Blanqui). But on the other hand, the various "irresponsible" acts of that moment are precisely what is needed for the continuation of the revolutionary movement of our own time (even if the circumstances restricted almost all those acts to the purely destructive level - the most famous example being the rebel who, when a suspect bourgeois insisted that he had never had anything to do with politics, replied, "That's precisely why I'm going to kill you").

*The Commune represents **the only realization of a revolutionary urbanism** to date - attacking on the spot the petrified signs of the dominant organisation of life, understanding social space in political terms, refusing to accept the innocence of any monument. Anyone who reduces this to some "lumpenproletarian nihilism", some "irresponsibility of the petroleuses," should specify what they believe to be of positive value in the prevailing society and worth preserving (it will turn out to be almost everything). All space is already occupied by the enemy..... Authentic urbanism will appear when the absence of this occupation is created in certain zones. What we call construction starts there.*

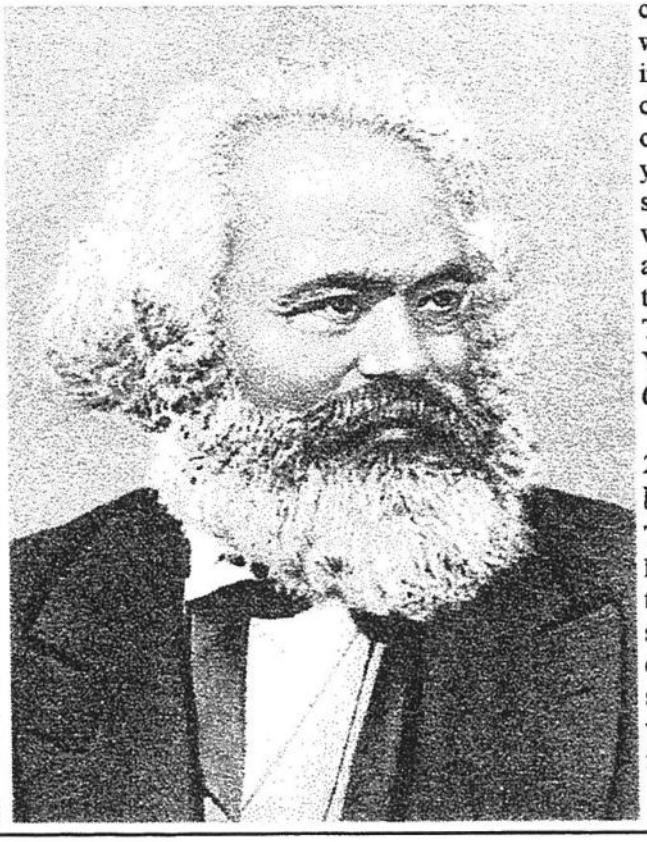
BOOK REVIEW

A Victorian Correspondence: The Letters of Dickens and Marx

Edited and Annotated by the International Communist Current (ICC). Published by The Fabian Society. £18.00.

This is a surprising book to come from the ICC and the nagging doubt remains in this reviewer's head that maybe they have made the whole thing up as some sort of elaborate joke. But for what purpose, and aimed at whom? And why have they involved themselves with The Fabian Society?

Anyway, the book makes for some interesting bedtime reading, especially if you concentrate on the letters rather than the ICC notes, which mostly consist of lines such as: "Marx clearly never wrote this letter even though it has been authenticated by seven leading bourgeois academics, three independent forensic scientists, and two librarians..."; and, "Dickens clearly proves himself here to be an agent of counter-revolution as well as a senile gibbering wreck of a fool...", etc. We are printing just one extract, to give a taste of the book, but would like to state that it seems that in this miserable world one dead writer is worth more than a thousand living human beings.



15th June 1861

Dear Karl,

It was very pleasant to see you again in Bognor, and how your English has improved! I have been thinking a lot about what you said about surplus value and I must honestly admit that I still don't have the foggiest idea what you mean. Of course, I understand the misery of the labouring folk, indeed I have written about it more eloquently than any other writer, but I do not think that our condition has anything to do with science, although, undoubtedly, scientific principles, such as the laws of supply and demand do exist and do affect us. As I grow older I think the reason for the misfortune of the labouring classes can be found in a certain kind of moss which exudes a mild intoxicant, it seems clear to me that people of a lower order than you and I are susceptible to this gas, while we, dear friend, are not. What do you think, my old Teutonic chum?

Your faithful servant,

Charles Dickens.

28th June 1861

Dear Charles,

Thankyou for your letter. It saddens me that a man of your supposed intellect cannot grasp the simple facts of surplus value, you are lucky indeed that I did not

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A Victorian Correspondence

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berate you with the theory of dialectic materialism, for I think your tiny head would have exploded and your liver would have packed its bags and left. You English writers are such dolts. I have read your "Oliver Twist" and let me tell you, man to man, that it is a piece of crap. How the boy had a toffs accent is beyond me, and why all your stories have to have such unlikely happy endings, well, it just makes me sick.

As for your delusions about the effects of moss on the working classes, I am truly flabbergasted. How does your wife put up with you? Also I would like to tell you that after meeting you recently my maid remarked on a very peculiar smell about your person, she said it made her vomit for a full two hours and has seriously damaged her chances of bearing children. I tell you this as a friend.
My best wishes,
Karl Marx.

7 July 1861
Dear Karl,
Oh, dear old Karl, how I laughed on reading your letter! Your comic wit is surely something to be savoured. I am, however, concerned for the well-being of your maid and you must tell me if the flowers I sent to her arrived safely, I do hope she is feeling better now. But enough of that, you will be pleased to hear that my theory of the effect of moss on certain social classes has been taken up by the Royal College of Science! How's that for you? Soon I envisage writing my own Communist Manifesto, only I will call it the Moss Manifesto, and it will lay down a programme of peaceful revolution whereby all moss will be eradicated from the planet and all men will finally stand as equals in an Utopia of Love. I already have the backing of several leading industrialists to whom the burdens of power and unbridled wealth are nothing more than a millstone hanging around their necks. I will set up my own International Moss-Gathering Mens Association, I will grow a proper beard, like yours, instead of this wispy little thing that I now wear, oh, my heart is filled with joy...
Your faithful servant,
Charles Dickens.

21 July 1861
Dear Charles,
Thankyou for your letter. Good God in Heaven! You are an absolute cretin! Recently I read your book "Our Mutual Friend" and I see quite clearly that you have based the character of the poor river-man's daughter on me. Me! If news of this outrage gets out I will surely be seeing you in court, where you will be divested of every penny you own. Scoundrel!
My best wishes,
Karl Marx.

Dickens and Marx continued to correspond in this vein until Dickens' death in 1870. The letters prove that revolutionaries today must go beyond the limits of the Dickensian analysis.

Are Children Agents of the Bourgeoisie?

It has come to light recently that the seemingly perfectly natural biological function of producing children in the human species may be the result of a genetic aberration, or *alteration*, that occurred at the rise of the first civilisation, in Cameroon, West Africa, forty billion years ago. Documents have been discovered in the Central Library of Cameroon's capital city, Yaounde, which describe a dramatic change in the lifestyles of humans of that area many billenia ago.

It seems that before the rise of towns and politics and exchange systems people lived for a good 400 years and did not reproduce, although sexual play was a popular pastime. However, at some point shortly before the building of the first town hall in history it seems that sections of the population began producing offspring. The records show that this was a time of great despair and gnashing of teeth for the people. Suddenly they were swamped by little people who had to have their every whim catered for, and who made the people tired and distraught, which consequently drastically reduced their lifespan.

Strangely, at the same time as this happened another phenomenon was occurring: some people were gaining economic and political power over others and making them work for them. Now, the historians and scientists who have discovered this event in history have, of course, managed to misinterpret the facts they have in their hands due to the fact that most scientists and historians are either complete fools or slavish propagandisers and apologisers for The Establishment or the status quo. These professionals see nothing wrong with a society that has one section of the population forcing the rest of the population to work and die for it, in fact they usually don't even see that this

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Are Children Agents of the Bourgeoisie?

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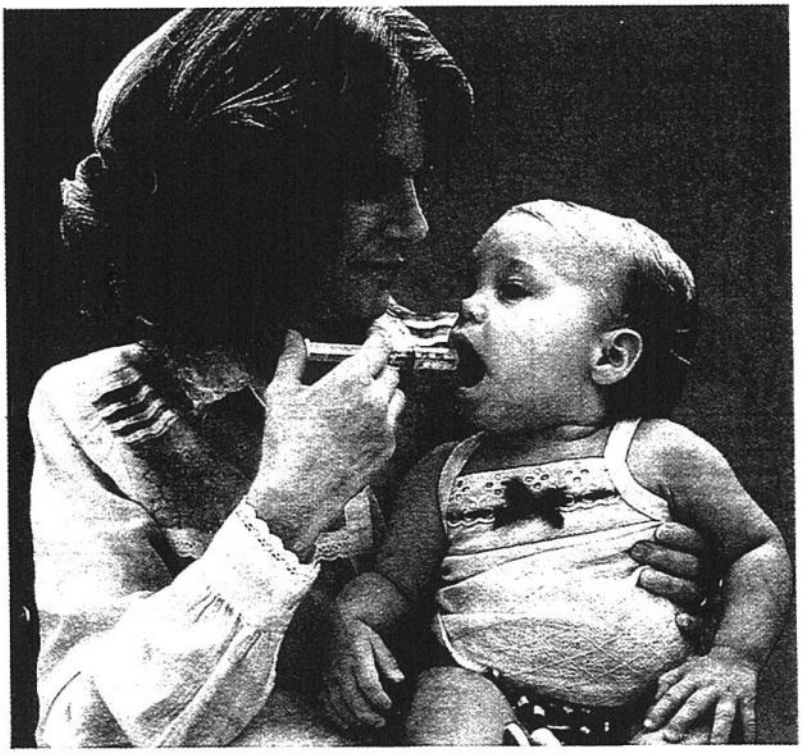
is what is going on. But we radical wierdos of the lunatic fringe can see precisely what is going on and therefore we can interpret this historical discovery in the correct way and use it to further our knowledge of the world and thereby aid the struggle of the working class in its often unconscious battle against its exploiters.

So, after many discussions, international day conferences, articles, thought, and drinking, we have come to the inescapable conclusion that the human body has been tampered with by the boss class in order to create a never ending supply of miserable workers and smug overlords. Humanity might have only lasted a mere 400 years without this biological change, but it would have been a beautiful 400 hundred years, without the mountains of murder and slavery that today fill every nook, cranny and open space of this tragic planet.

Today we only have to look at the effect children have on the working class to see that they do us no good, and in fact perpetuate and enhance our misery. They use up all our spare time; they make us consume more rubbish from the marketplace; they tire us out; they make us withdraw from social life; they make us attempt to condition them so that they will survive in this dog-eat-dog world, which means we are doing the bosses work for them; they make us smell; they rot our brains; and they make us work harder and keep us in line. Every time a worker has another kid the bosses must splutter out their champagne in laughter. It's different for them, of course, because they hire some wage-slave to look after their kids. In general we workers are stuck with our kids, and what can we offer them? A life of slavery and humiliation. It makes you wonder why we have kids at all. But of course we do it because the bosses want us to, and who are we to let them down?



"They make us attempt to condition them so that they will survive in this dog-eat-dog world"

For more on our views on kids you might like to read our following publications:

- ☐ *Kids: A Disaster for the Working Class*. 50 pence.
- ☐ *I Love Kids, But I Couldn't Eat a Whole One: The Rise of the Industrial Proletariat in Europe*. £60.00
- ☐ *Kids on the Barricades: An Exploration of the Use of Kids for Barricade Padding Throughout the Last Three Centuries*. 12 pence.

All these publications, plus many others, are available from the usual address.

Can Arthur Scargill Dance?

Glass Factory Worker Reg and his dog, Osman, were not the sad pro-boss gits that his great-nephew, Postman Pat and his cat, Jess, turned out to be. Glass Factory Worker Reg left his job and home in 1908 after a dispute with his mother-in-law [things like that happened in those days], and took his dog to Paris. Here they both got jobs on the French railway as sniffers for gas in long tunnels.

Labour unrest was rife throughout French industry in 1909, and especially on the railways. Soon after starting work, both Reg and Osman were persuaded to join the big union, the *Confederation General du Travail*, by fellow workers. This was a union which sought to enlist all workers into its ranks in order to pursue its aim of a society where no man had to go to work if it was raining. As Reg and Osman discovered, after attending many union meetings, there was a fairly wide range of opinion within the CGT. There were those who thought that the fundamental demand of no work on rainy days was really going a bit too far, and there were those who demanded that even on overcast days work should be halted.

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Can Arthur Scargill Dance?

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One leader of the extremist faction was Emile Pouget, a man in his late forties who had been trying to overthrow society since his youth. Pouget objected to the fact that workers had to toil in any weather, while the rich bosses would shelter in their mansions drinking champagne, smoking big cigars and sniggering if there was a spot of drizzle outside. To change this state of affairs Pouget had as a young man advocated assassination, hostage-taking and cake-throwing as a means of intimidating the ruling class into giving the workers what they needed. But in his later years Pouget saw that only a systemmatic programme of strike action, sabotage at work and mass formation dancing would force the bosses to give way. In *Le Syndicalisme Revolutionnaire*, published in 1910, Victor Griffuelhes, a close comrade of Pouget, wrote of mass formation dancing at work as "for us the weapon *par excellence* that present society puts into the hands of the working class."

Scargill: Arm-in-arm with the police against the working class

1909 was a busy year for militant workers on the railways in France. A confrontation with the bosses was looming and the union had to make sure that everyone's dancing would be up to it. From two workers in a lonely signal box, to the gangs of track-layers and ditchdiggers out on the rails, they all had to dance efficiently and in unison. The eyes of the rest of the working class in France, and indeed the whole of Europe, were on them.

Reg and Osman found the union meetings quite inspiring. Held in rooms above cafes or in large dance halls, they would start with a weather report for the week. Often in Paris this was given by Leon Jouhaux, who later that year was to become General Secretary of the CGT. Jouhaux used seaweed and old newspapers tied up in bunches over his front door to predict the weather. After that a militant such as Pouget would give a talk about the parasitical boss class and the need for social revolution. Finally, the participants of the meeting would form themselves into blocks and learn some rudimentary dance steps. At the end of the meeting, feeling elated from the dancing, they would leave for home shouting "Long Live the Social Revolution! Down With the Tyranny of the Weather!"

Months of this kind of training gave the railway workers the confidence they needed to go on strike against their bosses in 1910. There was plenty of formation dancing throughout France amongst the strikers, one railway shed in Toulouse was occupied for two whole weeks while railway workers danced in formation. The bosses were powerless to stop these actions. In the end the strikers won some considerable concessions from their employers, including the issuing of umbrellas to all outdoor track staff, but their main demand, which was to be given the winter off each year, was not agreed to. Still, it was an important battle for workers and it sparked off several imitation strikes throughout Europe. In Turin, for example, the *Coffee Grinders, Laundry Workers and Gravediggers Federation* struck successfully for an end to working in the afternoons by employing a disciplined formation dance stategy that bamboozled the bosses and even the Italian government, who tried to intimidate the dancers by threatening to steal their children.

In the present day, mass formation dancing is considered something of a threat to union leadership. However, the strategy was briefly unofficially employed by striking British miners in 1984, notably at the Wimbledon Colliery, where miners occupied the famous nearby tennis courts and danced in formation for three days. Their neo-syndicalist union leader, Arthur Scargill, in what many saw as a bizarre act, came down extremely hard on these miners, expelling them from the union and confiscating all their footwear and their lamps, which were actually British Coal Board property. Scargill eventually had to return the lamps to British Coal after a humiliating court case in which it was discovered that he had tried to sell the lamps at several Sunday market locations in Devon. Despite this, Scargill went on to lead the miners to a glorious defeat. Several commentators in the press have tried to understand why Scargill forbade any form of dancing throughout the dispute, some have suggested it was because he had higher political ambitions for himself, others that with his pronounced "two left feet" he would doubtless have lost the respect of the membership. We here, at the SPOOFVERSION bunker, know that it is because he is an authoritarian, counter-revolutionary, capitalist scumbag who is long overdue a dose of proletarian justice. Certainly, if mass formation dancing had been employed by the miners at the Battle of Orgreave a very different result may have ensued.

Subversion: The...

Ten years ago a group of us got together to form Subversion. Some had been in (and out of) Wildcat, others had been politically working together with those comrades for a number of years previously. We wanted to create a new organisation that could carry on the work of developing communist ideas and politics free from the need to label ourselves as either dogmatically marxist or anarchist.

Recently though, despite continuing to agree on our basic revolutionary politics, we have had disagreements about the way forward both organisationally and practically. There have also been some personal disagreements. These have made it hard for some of us to work together. As a result there are now only five of us left in the group and we have had to conclude that we no longer have the energy or enthusiasm to continue our activities as a collective.

(11) Rebellion is badly organised

There will be no further issues of our bulletin, though back issues and other publications are still available for the cost of postage for the time being. The Box number will be kept open for the next six months. The web site will continue indefinitely, but as the personal responsibility of the comrade who set it up.

A balance sheet of our activities:

☐ We have produced 24 editions of the Subversion magazine, 23 of which have been distributed for free. The print run since issue 10 has been 1000 and most have been successfully distributed - many by people who write to us for bundles. We have produced eight pamphlets, four of which are still available. We have produced numerous leaflets.

☐ In Manchester we have run many public meetings - some good, some awful. We organised these in collaboration with variously the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF) and Class War as well as on our own.

☐ We organised a national conference on the State and Capital and initiated a series of day schools with the ACF.

☐ We have attended networking meetings, including the Revolutionary Socialist Network, the Class Struggle Anarchist Network and the Northern Anarchist Network. We continue to be involved in the latter project.

☐ Wherever possible we have involved ourselves with nationally and locally important episodes of the class struggle. These included: the Anti-Poll Tax movement, where we helped set up one group and were active in a number of others; support for the Merseyside Dockers - again helping set up the Manchester support group; fighting the Job Seekers Allowance - getting the group going in Manchester as well as being active in other towns and nationally through the Groundswell network; involvement in the campaign against the M66 around Manchester and subsequently becoming involved in some Earth First! activities in Oldham and Manchester. This list would not be complete without mentioning our continuing efforts where we work and some, admittedly limited, success in initiating industrial action amongst teachers in Oldham. Our work around these issues led to the best articles we wrote. They were based on our real personal experiences of struggle, either as direct participants or through involvement with support groups.

☐ Set up a web-site featuring not only our own publications, but also important texts produced by earlier communist groups and individuals, a number of whom were participants in the 1918 German Revolution.

☐ Maintained regular international contacts and correspondence.

In all these activities we have sought to work in a principled and non-sectarian way with other revolutionaries.

This is not bad going, in our opinion, for a group that for most of its life numbered eight members or less.

Most importantly, we have been part of a process that has reshaped those politics that are often labelled communist, anarchist communist, council communist or libertarian communist. We would have liked to have had more influence, unfortunately by choosing to distance ourselves from both the marxist and anarchist labels, we have bred some suspicion amongst those who have preferred their cosy comforts.

Our greatest success was probably the Subversion bulletin. This provided an organised framework for revolutionaries to debate new issues arising in the class struggle. It attracted many contributions from non-members of our group, especially in the last six issues. At the time there wasn't really any other publication fulfilling the same role. On the other hand some of us felt that, in the process, the Subversion viewpoint got somewhat diluted. Moreover, there was too often little editorial critique or comment on the articles we published. At times we were reluctant to take a collective stance on the issues they raised. Whilst some might see this as another example of non-sectarianism, it all too often reflected a laziness on our behalf. This process also reflected the malaise that we had got into. In recent issues there has been little new produced by ourselves other than reports or book reviews. Our own lack of anything new to say is probably the most compelling reason to wind up the group.

Hopefully other opportunities will arise for a publication similar to Subversion in the future.

So what was the problem?

When we started Subversion we didn't really have a clear idea of the direction

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Party's Over!

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we hoped it would go in. However, we were pretty clear what we didn't want it to be. We didn't want it to be monolithic, though we did want the politics to be clear and for disagreements to be based on an understanding of what others were saying - all of which suggested the need for pretty rigorous discussion. As time went by, we also realised that we needed Subversion to grow. We never intended ourselves to be a purely local group, indeed although most of us live in and around Manchester, we do have a couple of members in other parts of the country. On the other hand, we did not see ourselves as some focal point for others to join, as some embryo of a new organisation or party. We had always hoped that other groups would emerge in other places and that as a result of practical co-operation a fusion would come about, creating a new communist organisation. That is the reason we have tried to be non-sectarian and have enthusiastically worked in the different networks we mentioned above. It is also the reason that we have worked so closely with the Anarchist Communist Federation.

In our opinion, groups need to grow or they stagnate. After a period of working together, people either end up agreeing on everything or end up knowing too well what the lines of disagreement are. Groups need a tension within discussions to provoke the development of ideas. If that does not happen, the result is sterility. We were faced, in Subversion, with having reached the point where that sterility was beginning to set in. As we said above, as a group we have produced nothing original for the past two years. We ended up living off other people's reactions to two discussions we started - one over the JSA and the other over the article "Green Communism". Even those responses had begun to dry up.

It was out of this situation that the disagreements we mentioned at the beginning arose. Some of these were personal and frankly, had we been a larger and more thriving group, would have counted for little. As with tired marriages, small problems become multiplied until only divorce is the solution. We also disagreed on the direction the group should go in. One viewpoint was that we should be working towards creating a national network of communists. This should be based on individual membership, drawing upon groups like ourselves, the ACF, Aufheben and the like. The majority in the group felt (and feel) that this proposal, whilst laudable, is impractical. We do not see where the basis for such a network exists. We may be wrong and would love to be proved so. If we are wrong we would undoubtedly support such an initiative. Failure to agree on this point, combined with the other problems was enough to make us look more seriously at the state we were in.

(12) Some practice passive resistance ("What!! Failed again!!!" "Parent=cop") (13) Or escape

At the end of the day, our main form of activity, as a group, at the moment is the production of Subversion. It is hard, intensive work to produce and distribute it. As we no longer feel any great enthusiasm for doing this, we had to ask ourselves - "What is the point?" Therefore the only honest thing to do is to cease publication and to explain to those who read Subversion why we are doing so.

What Next?

At the moment we can see no particular political organisation that we could all enthusiastically join. There are organisations doing good work and we would refer you to previous issues of Subversion for recommendations. In this country we would recommend Organise! as an interesting publication and suggest our readers contact the ACF to obtain a copy [c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX]. It looks like Smash Hits could also provide a useful vehicle for discussion [BM Box 5538, London WC1N 3XX]. For information purposes, both Counter Information [Transmission, 28 King Street, Glasgow, G1 5QP] and SchNews [c/o On-The-Fiddle, PO Box 2600, Brighton, BN2 2DX] make good reading.

We still see the need for political organisation and hope to be able to contribute to something new and worthwhile in the future. In the meantime we will continue to be active as individuals in various ways. We may also, if the need arises and the energy allows, produce future interventions in the name of Subversion.

Our thanks go to our many contributors, readers and supporters during the last ten years.

Comradely,

Subversion

September 1998.

Dept 10, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW, England, UK.

Subversion on the Web:
http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/8195
email: knightrose@geocities.com

"Leftism Rotted My Brain"

It is true beyond doubt that the ideology of leftiness is a tool of tyranny. It is also true that many radicals have been infected by this poison and whatever name they might give themselves, whether it be anarchist, marxist, communist, insurrectionary authoritarian blanquiist headbanger, or Guardian reader, we are all prey to its insidious insidiousness. Here are two things to look out for in your character that might reveal the true extent of your leftism:

1. A tendency to pat sections of the world's population on the head. This is meant metaphorically and describes that phenomenon whereby worthy, usually white, well-educated female and male politicos show a creepy deference to people like: Northern Irish Catholics; working class women; black people; gay people; leaders of struggles in other countries, even though they might be scheming authoritarian maoists, like the Zapatistas; etc. If you're not from Ireland and you start saying "yer man" then you are showing that you wish you were an oppressed Irish person and not the middle class guilt-bag that you feel yourself to be in reality. Or if you have organised your political meetings into "encuentros", then you may be an unsuspecting victim of the lefty "pat them on the head" syndrome. If you want to be less cool and more sharp stop being a patronising windbag, think for yourself and examine your own real desires.

2. Finding Jeremy Paxman sexy.

My Afternoon of Psychogeographic Hell in London by Mr. Arbitrural

I was travelling up to London by train, on my way to a picket of a shop in Oxford Street which had been identified as a seller of consumer products and an exploiter of shop-working staff and therefore an enemy of the international proletariat. I decided to make my way there in a psychogeographic manner, by wandering around and becoming oppressed by the associations of certain buildings and areas. I got off the tube somewhere in the centre of the city and was immediately confronted by swarms of Guardian Readers. It was terrifying, they were everywhere. I realised that they had been with me on the tube too. The ages of Guardian Readers are between the early twenties and early fifties, the young ones try to look intelligent and sensitive and the older ones try to look young. But they all have a certain London Liberal Arrogance. Maybe I'm being unfair, they would probably help you if you were lost or had fallen over, but I would suspect that they would be doing it for ulterior motives. That is, so that they could report back to their local branch of the Caring Guardian Reader Society with the news of how they had helped someone in difficulties.

I eventually found my way to Leicester Square where I felt oppressed by all the gaudy confidence of a hip and tacky capitalism. The buildings rose up around me like the facades of cinemas. In the middle of Leicester Square there is a small park. A few years ago this was the site of a building that secretly housed the pay-roll department of MI6, it was heavily fortified and disguised as a Chinese restaurant with offices above. The restaurant doubled as the staff canteen, it was a weird place to eat if you just wandered in off the street. Under what is now the small park there is rumoured to be a network of tunnels that lead to various locations in London, and one reputedly goes all the way to Bristol. The park is on a ley-line which links a Harvester eating house in Essex with Canterbury Cathedral, it is one of the very few "bendy" ley-lines known to exist.

Near a rubbish bin in Leicester Square, that was painted green and reminded me of my neo-rustic hometown, I saw a group of Guardian Readers intimidating a group of Independent Readers. The Independent Readers were heavily outnumbered and they stoically suffered the quiet sneering and pointed looks of the other group. But then, in an explosion of action, one of the Independent Readers hurled an empty paper cup in the face of one of the Guardian Readers. There was pandemonium as all the Readers got very agitated and held their arms straight down by their sides. Then one of the Guardian Readers spoke: "Is this your cup," she said, offering it back to the person who had thrown it. After a short silence he replied quietly, "Yes, thankyou, I dropped it." You could have cut the air the air with a folded-up copy of the Daily Telegraph. I felt quite sick at witnessing such scenes and as I ran back towards the tube station I vowed never to visit this hell-hole of a city ever again. On the phone that evening my friend, who I was supposed to have done the picket with, said I was a right wanker for not turning up.

Below: Map showing Oxford Street and Leicester Square